

თამილა მგალობლიშვილი

# ახალი იერუსალიმები საქართველოში

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# New Jerusalems in Georgia

თბილისი 2013 Tbilisi

ლიმის ხატებათა
და მათ ახალი
გამორჩეულია
ასევე უძველეს
თა ეკლესია.
არა კრებული.

*The first replicas of the city of Jerusalem began to appear in different parts of the world as early as the first half of the fourth century and were each named New Jerusalem. Among them, special note should be made of the ancient capital of Georgia, Mtskheta, and the Church of Otkhta Eklesia in the ancient Georgian historical province of Tao.*
*This small book is dedicated precisely to these two Georgian New Jerusalems.*

# Mtskheta - Georgians' New Jerusalem

## Introduction

The history of the relations between Georgia and the Holy Land begins as early as the time of Nebuchadnezzar the Great when the first wave of Hebrews came to Kartli - Iberia[1]. Georgian written sources also refer to several subsequent waves of Jews who came to Georgia and settled there[2]. However, currently the facts attesting the presence of the Jewish community in Georgia date only from the early centuries AD[3].

It is noteworthy that, according to the ancient Georgian chronicles, *Moktsevai Kartlisai* (Conversion of Kartli) and *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (The Life of Georgia) 7th-11th cc., the Mantle of the Prophet Elijah and the Chiton of Christ are buried in Mtskheta. They were brought to Mtskheta from the Holy Land by the Jews driven out of Jerusalem, who kept the location of the burials secret for many centuries[4].

Beginning from the 320s, after the formal adoption of Christianity in Iberia, the attitude of the Georgians to the Holy Land and to the Holy City of Jerusalem in particular became special.

According to old Georgian written sources, St Nino the Illuminator of Kartli, Equal-to-the-Apostles, arrived in Kartli from Jerusalem in the beginning of the fourth century. She found the first shelter in Urbnisi and remained there for a month among the community of Jews it is believed as she knew the Hebrew language[5].

After leaving Urbnisi, St Nino arrived in Mtskheta where she developed close relations with the local Jews. Jews were among the first people she converted to Christianity, namely Abiatar, who became the first Christian priest in Mtskheta, his daughter Sidonia and Sidonia's female friends. According to Georgian written sources it

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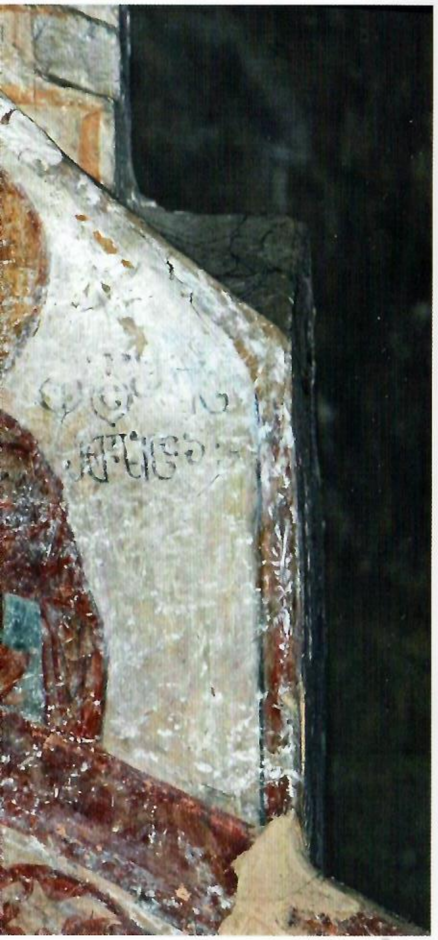
1. Kartli, Iberia - The Eastern Georgian Kingdom; *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, ed. by S. Qauxch'ishvili, vol. I (T'bilisi, 1955), pp. 15-16.

2. Ibid. vol. I, pp. 44, 100-101; vol. IV (T'bilisi, 1973), p. 53.

3. Tamila Mgaloblishvili, 'Juden und Christen in Georgien in den ersten Christlichen Jahrhunderten', in *Juden und Christen in der Antike*, ed. by J. van Amersfoort und J. van Oort (Kampen: Kok, 1990), pp. 94-100; T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi* (T'bilisi ,1991), pp. 165-82. T. Mgaloblishvili, I. Gagoshidze, 'The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in the Caucasus', in *Iberica Caucasica*, ed. by T. Mgaloblishvili, vol. 1. (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), pp. 46-58.

4. 'mok'c'evay k'art'lisay', in *dzveli k'art'uli agiograp'iuli literaturis dzeglebi*, ed. by Ilia Abuladze, vol. I (T'bilisi, 1963), pp. 127-28, 130.

5. see: 'mok'c'evay k'art'lisay', pp. 117-18; T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 169.



GERGETI TRINITY CHURCH,
PAINTING ON THE ALTAR SCREEN, ST NINO



is clear that St Nino came to Iberia following in the tracks of the Chiton of Christ. The sources also include the story of bringing the Chiton by the Mtskheta Jews from Jerusalem to Mtskheta and its secret burying[6].

It is to be noted that the stories of converting Iberia to Christianity highlight the contribution of the Mtskheta Jews and associate their ancestors with the first century Jerusalem[7].

It is also noteworthy that, according to ancient Georgian sources, the entire teaching of St Nino and her history is of Jerusalem and therefore of Palestinian origin and should not be connected to any other traditions[8].

The Palestinian provenance of St. Nino's history is also confirmed by the text of St Nino's prayer preserved in the *Moktsevai Kartlisai,* where she speaks of Baptism with water and soil. As a matter of fact, this text, as suggested by the German theologian, F. von Lillienfeld, deals with the early fourth-fifth century, prior to the Council of Ephesus, 431 AD, a doxological tradition characteristic of this area[9].

Consequently, it is not surprising that before Christianity was recognized as the official religion in Kartli in 320 AD, it had been preached there by the Jewish Christians. The first missionaries who arrived in Kartli adhered to the oldest Palestinian Christian tradition. And St. Nino's story about her activity in Kartli probably was created and written down by the Christian Jewish community of Mtskheta in Aramaic and was translated into Georgian, during the 4th – 5th cc.[10].

I think this is also attested by some so-called syntactic Syriacism which has been identified by T.Kurtsikidze in the text of the story of St Nino in *Moktsevai Kartlisai*[11]. It should be taken into consideration that such syntactic constructions are also characteristic of both Syriac and Aramaic, as suggested by K. Tsereteli[12]. The latter language is believed by many scholars to have been spoken, as well as one of the

6. see: 'mok'c'evay k'art'lisay', pp. 128-30, 133; T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 169.

7. T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 169 ; G.Peradze, Die Probleme der ältersten Kirchengeschichte Georgiens, Oriens Christianus, 29, Bd.7, Wiesbaden, 1932, pp.153-171; This paper was read in Oxford in 1932, 24.05.

8. Ibid., pp. 168-82.

9. Ibid., p. 172, n.71; Fairy von Lilienfeld, 'Amt und geistliche Vollmacht der heiligen Nino, 'Apostel und Evangelist' von Ostgeorgien, nach den ältesten georgischen Quellen', in *Horizonte der Christenheit: Festschrift für Friedrich Heyer zu seinem 85.* Geburtstag, ed. by Michael Kohlbacher and Markus Lesinski, *Oikonomia* 34 (Erlangen: Lehrstuhl für Geschichte und Theologie des Christlichen Ostens, 1994), pp. 224–49; G. W. H. Lampe, D. D., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 286.

10. T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 172.

11. C'. K'urc'ikidze, 'mok'c'evay k'art'lisays tek'stisa da enis sakit'xebi', *p'ilologiuri dziebani*, vol. 1 (T'bilisi, 1964), pp. 93-95; Ilia Abuladze, *k'art'uli da somxuri literaturuli urt'iert'oba IX-X ss-shi* (T'bilisi, 1944), p. 54; G. Garitte, 'Vies Géorgiennes de S.Symeon Stylite L'ancien et S.Ephrem', in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 171, Scriptores Iberica, t.7 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1957), p. 19.

12. see: T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 172, n.70.

ო ურთიერთობა
ენი კვლავ ებრა-
მისი ქალიშვილი
დ ნათლად ჩანს,
თული ისტორია
ისა და მისი საი-

ნიის გაქრისტია-
თელი ებრაელი
სტესდროინდელ

ხედვით, წმ. ნი-
ისაა და მას სხვა

ევაჲში“ შემონა-
უბარი. ფაქტობ-
მ არეალისათვის
დოქსოლოგიურ

ა იმის აღნიშვნა,
ებამდე (320-ია-
ელი მისიონერე-
ხოლო წმ. ნინოს

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ავი, გვ. 169.
კლესიის უძველესი
e, Die Probleme der
71.

Nino, 'Apostel und
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nomia 34; Erlangen:
pe, D.D., *A Patristic*



written languages of Jewish Christians in the first centuries of the New Era[13]. But then, any educated Georgian could have been fluent in written, as well as in spoken Aramaic, as archaeological finds unearthed in the course of excavations on the territory of Georgia give us grounds to believe. A particular variant of the North Mesopotamian Aramaic script – the so-called Armazi script – was one of the officially recognized forms of writing, along with Greek, in pre-Christian Georgia[14].

According to Georgian and foreign sources, it is noteworthy that Christians were in Georgia before Christianity became the state religion. It is also testified by the archaeological excavations in various parts of Kartli, which discovered Christian burials dating from the 2nd and 3rd centuries[15].

The presence of Christians in the Jewish community of Mtskheta is also evident by the specificity of the necropolises, which are to be found in Samtavro and Urbnisi, near Mtskheta. These necropolises are distinct from all others found on the territory of Georgia. This specificity, doubtless, needs some further investigation[16].

## St Nino in Mtskheta: The 'Lower Church'

Now let us consider how Mtskheta emerged as a New Jerusalem of the Georgians thanks to the zealous efforts of St Nino. The term – New Jerusalem – here implies the Jerusalem restored by Constantine the Great by tracing the holy places of the earthly life of Jesus Christ[17]. I mean the Holy City, where Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected, where he appeared as the Messiah, as foreseen by the prophets in the Old Testament[18].

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13. T. Mgaloblishvili, I. Gagoshidze, 'The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in the Caucasus', p. 41; *Апокрифы древних христиан : Исследование, тексты, комментарии* (Москва, 1989), с.54; А. Л. Хосроев, *Александрийское христианство : по данным текстов из Наг Хаммади* (Москва, 1991), с.10; E. Schürere, *The history of the Jewish People in the age of Jesus Christ*, New English version revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Miller & M. Black, vol. II (Edinbourgh: Clark, 1979), pp.20-81; A. A. Erhardt, 'Judaeo-Christians in Egypt: the Epistulae Apostolorum and the Gospel of Hebrews', in *Studia Evangelica*, Bd. 3. B. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), p. 361.

14. G. Ceret'eli, *udzvelesi k'art'uli carcerebi palestinidan* (T'bilisi, 1960), pp. 50-51; T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 170; T. Mgaloblishvili, I. Gagoshidze, 'The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in the Caucasus', pp. 46-58.

15. T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 170;

16. T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 170; T. Mgaloblishvili, I. Gagoshidze, 'The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in the Caucasus', pp. 46-58.

17. P. Guran, 'The Constantinople - New Jerusalem, at the Crossing of Sacred Space and Political Theology', in *New Jerusalems, Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, ed. by A. Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), pp. 42-46.

18. S. Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), pp. 268-69; moc'ik'ult'a sak'meni 2:16, 25; 4:11, 25; 8:35; Luke 24:27, 44.

The transformation of Mtskheta, the ancient Georgian capital, into a Christian city was also related to the establishment of the holy places of Christ's early life in the city. However, together with the foundation of holy sites and the translation of holy relics, the basis of New Jerusalem in Mtskheta, unlike other New Jerusalems, was the Jerusalem rite of liturgy officiated at the Holy Sepulchre. This liturgy in Mtskheta and all over Kartli was conducted in Georgian from the 5th century – here I mean Jerusalem liturgical books, such as the Jerusalem Lectionary, the Ancient Tropologion and the Polycephalon. The Georgian translations of these books were already known as early as the 5th and 6th centuries. As the Greek originals of these books are lost, the Georgian translations have acquired the importance of the original texts[19].

St Nino found Mtskheta a fully pagan town. Initially she stayed in the royal garden in Mtskheta, where, according to tradition, the Chiton of Christ was buried. St Nino stayed in the garden for almost nine months praying for the conversion of the country[20]. Later, she found a solitary abode in a Makvlovani, a thorny bush outside the city wall[21].

As a matter of fact it is in this period that the Saint began her apostolic activities in Iberia and this period is characterized by St Nino's vigils and by the miracles that she performed.

After the conversion of the royal family, St Nino commenced intensive ecclesiastical construction activities in the capital.

According to Georgian historical sources, St Nino first erected a small wooden church known as the Lower Church in the royal garden. For the construction of this church she used the marvellous cedar of Lebanon miraculously growing on the site where Christ's Chiton had been buried in the royal garden. According to *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, she had seven pillars carved from this tree, six of which were easily erected by the builders. The seventh one, referred to as the 'life giving pillar' in the chronicle, could be erected only after the ardent prayers of St Nino. At dawn it rose to the sky like a pillar of flame and then descended to its base. By describing this miracle, the chronicler highlights the fact of the sacralization of the church and makes reference to the name of the church *Tsmidai tsmidatai* - Holy of Holies[22].

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19. К. Кекелидзе, *Иерусалимский Канонарь VII века* (Тифлис, 1912); К. Кекелидзе, *Литургические грузинские памятники в отечественных книгохранилищах и их научное значение* (1908); G. Garitte, *Le Calendrier Palestino-Géorgien du Sinaiticus* 34 (X-e siècle), ed. by G. Garitte (Bruxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1958); *Le grand Lectionnaire de l'Eglise de Jerusalem* (V-VIII siècle), ed. by M. Tarchnischvili, I-II, CSCO, vol. 188 (Peters Publishers, 1959-1960), p. 189; A. Renoux, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem* 121, Patrologia Orientalis, t. 35, fasc. 1; t. 36, fasc. 2 (Turnhout, Brepols, 1969-71); Akaki Shanidze, 'xanmeti lek'c'ionari', in *dzveli k'art'uli enis dzeglebi*, vol. I (T'bilisi, 1944); A. Shanidze, 'xanmeti mravalt'avi', *t'bilisis universitetis moambe*, vol. VII (1926); Elene Metreveli, C'ac'a Chankievi, Lili Xevsuriani, *udzvelesi iadgari* (T'bilisi, 1980); M. van Esbroeck, *Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens* (Louvain-La-Neuve: Peters Publishers, 1975); T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*.

20. 'mok'c'evay k'art'lisay', pp. 122-23.

21. Ibid., pp. 84, 138.

22. Ibid., p. 160; *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, vol. I, pp. 111-19.

ქალაქი ხვდება. იგი თავდაპირ-
თანახმად, უფლის კვართი იყო
ბს და ლოცულობს ამ წარმართი
ით, იგი ქალაქის კედლის გარეთ,

ო მოღვაწეობა იბერიაში, რომე-
წაულებით.
ლის დედაქალაქ მცხეთაში აქტი-

ს ეკლესია სამეფო ბაღში ააშენა.
თის დაფლვის ადგილზე სასწაუ-
იიყენა. ამ ხისგან მან, „ქართლის
ათლევინა, რომელთაგან ექვსი
რომელიც წყაროში მოიხსენიე-
. ნინოს გულმხურვალე ლოცვის
დ ამაღლდა ზეცად და მხოლოდ
გვამცნობს ეკლესიის საკრალი-
დაჲ წმიდათაჲ"[22].
ა „წმიდაჲ წმიდათაჲ", ასევე ეკ-
რა თქმა უნდა, სოლომონ მეფის
აჲ წმიდათაჲ", როგორც ცნობი-
იმ წმინდა ადგილს, სადაც სჯუ-
ძველაღთქმისეულ კარავსა და

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uxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1958);
vili, I-II, (Peters Publishers, 1959-1960),
a Orientalis, t. 35, fasc. 1; t. 36, fasc. 2,
*თული ენის ძეგლები*, ტ. I, (თბილისი,
*მბე*, ტ. VII, 1926; ელ. მეტრეველი, ც.
broeck, *Les plus anciens homéliaires*
ი, *კლარჯული მრავალთავი*.



სამთავრო, წმ. ნინოს ეკლესია

SAMTAVRO, ST NINO'S CHURCH



წმ. ნინოს ჯვარი ST. NINO'S CROSS

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*Holies* refers to the tabernacle of M
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of the Covenant, but also because i
the Covenant was placed there[23].

The 'Lower Church' of Mtskheta
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Moses and Solomon, with its Ark o
was also a Great Zion, as noted in *K*

It is obvious that beginning from
the church erected by Georgians in
carried the name of Great Zion, like

It is an established fact that beg
Jerusalem from the Old and New Te
the tradition of the ancient church i
the name of the basilica is related
while the city of Tyre is the New Jer

Other examples from ancient
Iberia and Aksum (Ethiopia)[26]. Aks
being considered a holy city is sim
where, according to tradition, the

23. see. T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarju*
Палестинский сворник, т. V, вып. I (С.
Flavius, *Josephus: The Essential Writin*
Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel Pu
*Jewish Temple Paradigms of Christian*
the Research Centre for Eastern Chris
htm (accessed at 23.06.2011 ).

24. *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, vol. I, p. 198.

25. see. Eusebius *Hist Eccl.* X,3;
'Иерусалимизация» литургического
Лидов, (Москва: Индрик, 2009), с.6
clark, 2007), p. 15.

26. C.Haas, 'Mountain Constantines
pp. 101-126.

In all likelihood the Holy of Holies, the name given in the aforementioned records, as well as the number of the carved pillars, is associated with the Temple of Solomon of the Old Testament. *The Holy of Holies* refers to the tabernacle of Moses and the holy site in the Temple of Solomon where the Ark of the Covenant was located. However, the Holy of Holies was a sacred place not solely because it held the Ark of the Covenant, but also because it was the place of the revelation of the Lord; it is also why the Ark of the Covenant was placed there[23].

The 'Lower Church' of Mtskheta, the Holy of Holies, like the Holy of Holies of Solomon, was the most sacred site in all Georgia, since it was the place of the Lord's revelation, where, unlike the Holy of Holies of Moses and Solomon, with its Ark of the Covenant, the Chiton of Christ was buried. However, the church was also a Great Zion, as noted in *Kartlis Tskhovreba*.

It is obvious that beginning from the period of the presence of St Nino in Mtskheta, the Holy of Holies, the church erected by Georgians in New Jerusalem, was a replica of the Temple of Solomon and it also carried the name of Great Zion, like the Temple of the Old Testament[24].

It is an established fact that beginning from the 4$^{th}$ century, the creation of replicas of the holy sites of Jerusalem from the Old and New Testaments began in different parts of the world. The oldest seems to be the tradition of the ancient church in Tyre, consecrated in the year 315. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, the name of the basilica is related to King Solomon – it is the Holy of Holies and Zion at the same time, while the city of Tyre is the New Jerusalem of Phoenicia[25].

Other examples from ancient written sources include the account of the miraculous conversion of Iberia and Aksum (Ethiopia)[26]. Aksum was a New Jerusalem of the sixth century, and the reason for its being considered a holy city is similar to the case of Mtskheta, Zion, i.e. the New Temple of Solomon, where, according to tradition, the Ark of the Covenant had been transferred. It seems natural that Zion

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23. see. T'amila Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, p. 179; А. Олесницкий, *Ветхозаветный храм*, Православный Палестинский сворник, т. V, вып. I (С. –Петербург: Православное Палестинское Общество, 1889), с.176; Josephus Flavius, *Josephus: The Essential Writings, A Condensation of Jewish Antiquities and the Jewish War*, trans. and ed. by Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), p. 141; M. Barker, *Fragrance in the Making of Sacred Space, Jewish Temple Paradigms of Christian Worship*, this paper was read at the conference on Sacred Spaces convened by the Research Centre for Eastern Christian Culture (Moscow, 2004), http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/default.htm (accessed at 23.06.2011 ).

24. *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, vol. I, p. 198.

25. see. Eusebius *Hist Eccl.* X,3; X,4.3; 4.25; 4.36; 4.45; X, 4.44; X. 4.70; see also: А.М.Пентковский 'Иерусалимизация» литургического пространства в византийской традиции', *Новые Иерусалимы*, ред. А. М. Лидов, (Москва: Индрик, 2009), с.60-61; see also: M.Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, (London: t&t clark, 2007), p. 15.

26. C.Haas, 'Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 1, 2008, pp. 101-126.

in Aksum was also incorporated in the Christian sacred geography. The confirmation of this might be the arrival of thirteen Syrian fathers in Iberia[27] and of nine Syrian fathers into Aksum[28].

In Iberia and Aksum, the Syrian fathers found earthly replicas of the holy city of Jerusalem with their holy sites, both of which came from the Old Testament Temple, namely the Holy of Holies, i.e. Great Zion in Mtskheta, in which the Chiton of Christ had been interred, and Zion in Aksum to which the Ark of the Covenant had been transferred. It appears that by the 6th century the holy sites of Mtskheta and Aksum marked the extreme borders of the Christian oecumene or inhabited world, between the Caucasus and the Red Sea[29].

With regard to the Zion of Aksum, of note is another ancient narrative, according to which the site for the church of Zion was marked by means of a 'pillar of light'. It is also worth mentioning that there used to be a pillar erected in the central temple of Lalibela (again Ethiopia) called the 'pillar of light' ('Amda Berkhan'). As noted by the Russian scholar, A. Lurie, while studying these ancient Ethiopian narratives one is more likely to refer to this pillar as Svetitskhoveli (the 'life giving pillar' in Georgian), standing in the first church built in Mtskheta, rather than calling it by Ethiopian name[30]. Later in the 11th century, this name – Svetitskhoveli - was given to the cathedral built in its place, though it was consecrated in the name of the Apostles.

## The 'Upper Church' in Mtskheta

Returning to Georgia, as noted, according to the Vita of St Nino, after staying in the royal garden for some time, St Nino moved to Makvlovani, the thorny bush, outside the city wall. The Saint did so because it was her wish to be quite alone and lead a stricter ascetic life. While living in Makvlovani, St Nino's name became famous due to her incessant, ardent prayers. Here she found many disciples as well. It is also in Makvlovani that the construction of another smaller wooden church was started so as not to damage Makvlovani, the abode of St Nino, where she performed numerous miracles and 'great healings'.

The site for a church at Makvlovani, the thorny bush , was sacralized by St Nino herself: according to

27. For the bibliography on the arrival of the Syrian Fathers in Kartli see: D.Merkviladze, *asurel mamat'a k'art'lshi mosvlis dro*, T'bilisi, 1996, pp.1-33; see also: Z.Alek'sidze, *Abibos Nekreselis martvilobis shescavlis tek'stologiur-k'ronologiuri sakit'xebi*, mravalt'avi, XVIII, 1999, pp.12-29; Z.Alek'sidze, *mandilioni da keramioni dzvel k'art'ul mcerlobashi*, in Akademia, T'bilisi, 2001, pp. 9-15; Z.Alek'sidze, *vin aris sinas mt'aze aghmoch'enil asurel mamat'a c'xovrebashi moxseniebuli amaspo dedop'ali?* in collection: axlo aghmosavlet'i da sak'art'velo, IV, 2005, T'bilisi, pp. 206-207.

28. C.Haas, 'Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia', pp. 101-106.

29. Compare with: C.Haas, 'Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia', pp. 101-106.

30. see: В.М.Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум через храм Соломона: архаичные предания о Сионе и Ковчеге завета в составе Кебра Негест и их трансляция через Константинополь', *Христианский Восток*, т. 2 (VIII), (Санк-Петербург, Москва: Алетейя, 2001), стр. 178, п.101.

records, with the Virgin's blessing, she carved a cross from a branch of vine, which she tied with her hair and erected it and continued to pray ardently. This cross continues to be known as St Nino's Cross and is still kept in Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi. Makvlovani the thorny bush, in its turn, is certainly related to the Prophet Moses and to the holy Biblical places.

In the written sources, this church is referred to as the 'Upper Church'. I think that this name is also associated with Jerusalem, as the ancient name of Mount Zion is the name of a quarter located near David's Tower, or the 'Upper City'[31].

After the fall of Jerusalem there must have been Christians in the Holy City, though a traveller from Bordeaux in 333 never mentions them. He only refers to one synagogue situated on Mount Zion instead of the seven that once stood there[32]. Cyril of Jerusalem in the year 348 in his XVI Catechesis speaks of the 'Upper Church' situated on Mount Zion[33]. In 392, Epiphanius of Salamis mentions only one small church on Mount Zion[34].

Therefore, as has been noted above, the name of the 'Upper Church', built near Makvlovani in Mtskheta, may be associated with the ancient name of Mount Zion, a quarter of Jerusalem named 'Upper City'. According to Cyril of Jerusalem, the small church located there was the 'Upper Church'. It was well named as in Jerusalem Mount Zion was slightly elevated as compared with the Temple of the Old Testament and the Holy Sepulchre church. The site of the 'Upper Church' in Mtskheta is also a little higher than that of the first church of Mtskheta i.e. 'the Holy of Holies' or the 'Lower Church'. Hence according to the Vita of St Nino, the sites of both churches erected in Mtskheta are sacred. The first church was built where the Chiton of Christ had been buried, while the other was constructed in Makvlovani associated with Moses and the thorny bush of the Old Testament.

## The 'Golgotha' of the Georgians

Equally notable in the Vita is the story of the erection of three crosses, which relates how St Nino made three crosses from a wonderful miraculous tree in Mtskheta. The locations for these crosses were also miraculously indicated to the saint by stars. The first cross was placed by St Nino on the top of a hill by

31. P.L.Maier, Josephus, *The Essential Writings, A Condensation of Jewish Antiquities and Jewish War*, 1988, pp. 244, 335-345; see also: P.W.L.Walker, *Holy City Holy Places? : Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in theFourth Century*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 282-308.

32. J.Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels, Bordeaux Pilgrim*, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999), pp. 30-31.

33. *Patrologia Graecae, ed. by* J.P.Migne, t.33, Paris, 1886, Cat. 16.4.

34. J.Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002), p. 351; D.Pringle, 'The City of Jerusalem' in *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdon of Jerusalem* vol. III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 261.

მ. ნინოს „ცხორების“ თანახ-
ი, „მაყვლოვანში“ – მაყვლის
უფრო მეტად განმარტოებუ-
„მაყვლოვანში“ ცხოვრებისას
მრავალი დაემონაფა. „ქვემო
, ასევე პატარა ხის ეკლესიის
მინდანის სამყოფელი ადგი-

თვით წმ. ნინოს მიერ ხდება:
ლევისგან გამოთლის ჯვარს,
ობს გულმხურვალე ლოცვას.
ასში, სიონის საკათედრო ტა-
თქმა უნდა, მოსე წინასწარ-

ლი. ეს სახელწოდება, ჩემი
მთის უბნის უძველეს სახელს

ალბათ, იყვნენ ქრისტიანები,
მთაზე იგი მხოლოდ ერთი სი-
დ[32]. კირილე იერუსალიმელი
ი „ზემო ეკლესიის“ შესახებ[33].
ასახელებს სიონის მთაზე[34].

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*Antiquities and Jewish War*, 1988,
*tudes to Jerusalem and the Holy*
sity Press, 1990), pp. 282-308.

1999), pp. 30-31.

Phillips, 2002), p. 351; D.Pringle,
*m* vol. III, (Cambridge: Cambridge



სამთავროს დედათა მონასტერი

SAMTAVRO NUNNERY

...იის“ სახელი, როგორც უკვე აღ-
„ზემო ქალაქს“ — უკავშირდებო-
... თანახმად, „ზემო ეკლესია“ იყო.
...აძართან და ქრისტეს საფლავის
...ემო ეკლესიის“ ადგილი მცხეთა-
- „წმიდაჲ წმიდათაჲსთან“, იგივე
...ს“ თანახმად, მცხეთაში აშენებუ-
... წმ. კვართის ადგილზე შენდება,
...ს უკავშირდება.

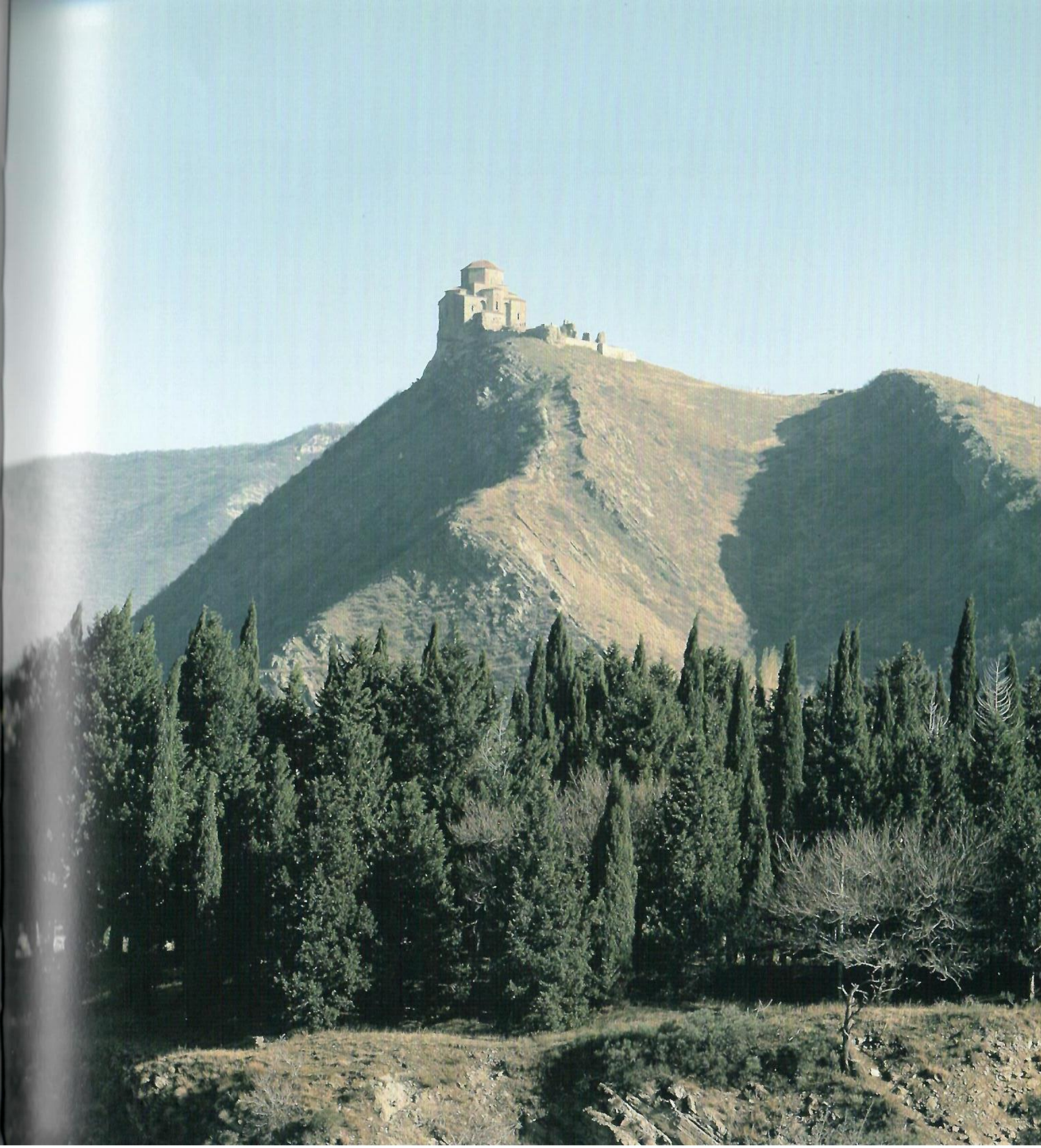
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...ხრობილი სამი ჯვრის აღმართ-
...სგან წმ. ნინო ქმნის სამ ჯვარს.
...ავებით მიენიშნება წმინდანს. ამ
...ე მთის წვერზე, ნიშნად ქრისტი-
...ლითაც კიდევ ერთი წმ. ადგილი
... ორ ჯვარს წმ. ნინო ასევე ვარ-
...სავლეთითა და დასავლეთით[35].
...ბა წმ. ნინოს დროინდელი ქრის-

...ი ქართველთა გოლგოთა ხდება.
...ა ცის ქვეშ იდგა VI ს-ის დასას-
...ის ჯვრის მონასტერი ხსენებული
...კავშირდება ერთ-ერთი უძველე-
...ომელიც ყოველწლიურად ქვემო
...თი მსვლელობით სრულდებოდა.
...რის ქართულ თარგმანში (იგუ-
...ლიტურგიკული პრაქტიკა, თუმცა
...დარში.[36]

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... *Palestiono-Géorgien du Sinaiticus* 34,



Mtskheta as a symbol of the victory of Christianity. This is a triumphal cross which marked another holy site in Mtskheta – the 'Golgotha' of the Georgians. The other two crosses were also erected on the sites indicated by stars to the east and west of Mtskheta respectively[35]. The setting up of the three crosses marked the boundaries of the sacred space of Christianity in Iberia, in the time of St Nino.

As previously mentioned, the Georgian 'Golgotha' was identified as a site for the first cross. The cross, like the one of Golgotha in Jerusalem, stood in the open air until the end of the 6th century when the Holy Cross Monastery was built in the image of that in the Holy City to protect the cross. Beginning from the time of St Nino onwards, this cross has been related to the Feast of the Cross, one of the most ancient Christian traditions, which was conducted each year as a procession with prayers and started from the 'Lower Church'. This reference to the feast was made in the Georgian translation of a Jerusalem lectionary as early as in the 5th century i.e. the 7th century manuscript describing the 5th century liturgical practice, and is also to be found in the 10th century calendar of Ioane Zosime[36].

According to the aforementioned liturgical calendars and Georgian historical sources, the name of this feast was 'Aghvsebis Zatikis Zatiki' i.e. the third Sunday after Easter Sunday. It is important to note that, beginning from the period of St Nino, this festival was associated in Georgia with the Golgotha of the Georgians – Mtskheta Holy Cross – while in Jerusalem it was related to the Georgian Holy Cross Monastery in Jerusalem, as indicated by 14th and 15th century Latin pilgrims[37].

It is also remarkable that the Golgotha Cross became widely popular in Georgia in the period when St Nino was active. In Georgia it is known as a pre-altar cross beginning from the ninth-tenth century. None of its analogues seems to have been preserved to the present day, either in Western or Eastern Christendom. An important number of these crosses, survive mostly in the highland region of Svaneti Georgia, which appear to be unique medieval replicas of the Golgotha Cross of Jerusalem.

Thus, according to Georgian written sources, St Nino built two churches in Mtskheta, the second one being finished after her death. It was in her time that a number of holy sites were marked, a fact which was important in terms of adopting the Jerusalem rite in Kartli. It is also obvious that the activity of St Nino in Iberia is based on the knowledge of the Jerusalem tradition in 320s. The discovery of the Holy Cross

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35. „mok'c'evay k'art'lisay', pp.86, 147-152.

36. Ak.Shanidze, xanmeti lek'c'ionari, T'bilisi, 1944, pp. 063-064; G.Garitte *Le Calendrier Palestiono-Géorgien du Sinaiticus* 34, p. 117; see also: T'.Mgaloblishvili, klarjuli mravalt'avi, pp.155-157; T'.Mgaloblishvili, *cm.jvris udzvelesi dghesascauli k'art'ul cerilobit' cqaroebshi*, kreb.cminda nino, T'bilisi, 2008, pp.226-233.

37. Fra Niccolo of Poggibonsi, 'A voyage beyond the seas, 1346-1350', *Studium biblicum Franuscanum*, Collectio Maior, n. 2, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), p. 57; see: I.Davidi, *nacerebi*, t.I, Tel-Aviv - Jerusalem (1976), pp. 296-297; see also: Viazo da Venezia al sancto Iherusalem (1480-1500), (Roma, 1972); According to the Latin sources the above feast was observed on the second Sunday after Easter. The Georgian sources name the third Sunday. In fact both the Latin and the Georgian sources refer to one and the same feast, though Latins begin counting from the week after Easter, while Georgians, when counting, include Easter Sunday as well.



სვანეთი, ლაგურკის ეკლესია,
საკურთხევლისწინა ჯვარი

SVANETI, LAGURKA CHURCH,
PRE-ALTAR CROSS

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imported and adopted by the saint.

## Georgia's Jerusalem

Beginning from the fourth century, after the entry of St Nino in Kartli,
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needed by the newly established church. With this aim and thanl
nobles, ecclesiastic figures and Peter the Iberian in particular, the
well as monasteries were founded in the Holy Land. The earliest su
Georgian graphite of Nazareth, dating from the fourth-fifth centu
These examples also offer a first confirmation of the Georgian ch
Foundation of the World'[39] and of the original name for Georgian
century[40]. However both can only be found in Georgia from the eig
that the Georgian alphabet was also created in the Holy Land, ar
books were translated into Georgian in order for the liturgy to be h
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It is clear that from the fifth to the tenth century, the liturgy in
Jerusalem tradition, due to which this period can justly be referr
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38. see: Z.Alek'sidze, *luvri, sinas mta, nazaret'i, epigrap'ikuli etiudebi*, k

39. L.Di Segni, 'The Beit Safafa inscription Reconsidered and the O
*Exploration Journal*, v. 43, (Israel Exploration Society, 1993), pp. 157-168;
*in the sixth-century Jerusalem*, 1997, pp. 1-8, (not-published).

40. T.Mgaloblishvili, 'An Unknown Georgian Monastery in the Holy Land
*and Shrines*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006-2007), pp. 533-537.

41. It was a great pleasure for me to learn that the Austrian scholar o
opinion in his article which he had sent to me before publishing, for w
wann und zu welchem Zweck wurde das georgische Alphabet gescha
Alphabete Als Kulturhistorisches Phäbomen, Referate des Internationale
in *Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* Bd. XXVII, (Wien, 2011), pp.85



'I, LAGURKA CHURCH,
PRE-ALTAR CROSS



in Jerusalem by St Helena and also the reconstruction activities in the Holy City in 326 were completely unknown to St Nino. Hence, her activity can be dated to this very period.

After the death of St Nino, Georgians zealously continued to further reinforce the Jerusalem rite imported and adopted by the saint.

## Georgia's Jerusalem

Beginning from the fourth century, after the entry of St Nino in Kartli, the Georgians showed great eagerness to become familiar with Christian culture and undertook the translation and dissemination of the literature needed by the newly established church. With this aim and thanks to the efforts of the Georgian kings, nobles, ecclesiastic figures and Peter the Iberian in particular, the first seats of culture and scriptoria, as well as monasteries were founded in the Holy Land. The earliest surviving examples of Georgian script, the Georgian graphite of Nazareth, dating from the fourth-fifth century, were discovered in the Holy land[38]. These examples also offer a first confirmation of the Georgian chronology 'Dasabamitgan' or 'From the Foundation of the World'[39] and of the original name for Georgian 'Kartveli' and they date from the 5th-6th century[40]. However both can only be found in Georgia from the eight-ninth century. It can also be assumed that the Georgian alphabet was also created in the Holy Land, and that the ancient Jerusalem liturgical books were translated into Georgian in order for the liturgy to be held in Georgian. However, this is just an assumption but not only mine[41].

It is clear that from the fifth to the tenth century, the liturgy in Iberia was conducted according to the Jerusalem tradition, due to which this period can justly be referred to as the Jerusalem Epoch in Iberia. The fifth and sixth centuries saw the translation of the first liturgical books into Georgian, namely of the Lectionary, Tropologion and Polycephalon. These books were used by the Georgian Church in Georgian. One of the most important results of King Vakhtang Gorgasali in the 5th-6th centuries, I believe, was the

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38. see: Z.Alek'sidze, *luvri, sinas mta, nazaret'i, epigrap'ikuli etiudebi*, kreb.mneme, T'bilisi, 2000, pp.18-25.

39. L.Di Segni, 'The Beit Safafa inscription Reconsidered and the Question of Local Era in Jerusalem', *Israel Exploration Journal*, v. 43, (Israel Exploration Society, 1993), pp. 157-168; L.Di Segni, *A Georgian Chronological System in the sixth-century Jerusalem*, 1997, pp. 1-8, (not-published).

40. T.Mgaloblishvili, 'An Unknown Georgian Monastery in the Holy Land', *Aram, Palestinian Christianity, Pilgrimages and Shrines*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006-2007), pp. 533-537.

41. It was a great pleasure for me to learn that the Austrian scholar of Byzantine studies, W. Zaibt, gave a similar opinion in his article which he had sent to me before publishing, for which I am very grateful. See: W. Seibt, 'Wo, wann und zu welchem Zweck wurde das georgische Alphabet geschaffen?' in Die Entstehung der Kaukasischen Alphabete Als Kulturhistorisches Phäbomen, Referate des Internationalen Symposions (Wien, 1.-4. Dezember, 2005), in *Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* Bd. XXVII, (Wien, 2011), pp.85-92.

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ები დიდი გატაცებით შეუდგნენ
ესიისათვის საჭირო ლიტერატუ-
დიდებულთა, ეკლესიის მოღვა-
რთული კულტურისა და სამწერ-
ები და სავანეები. ჩვენს დრომდე
' სს.) სწორედ წმ. მინაზეა აღმო-
ბა პირველი დამოწმება ქართუ-
ლისაც" (V–VI სს.)[40], რომლებიც
ჭდილება მრჩება, თითქოს, აქვე
ლიყო უძველესი იერუსალიმური
ულად აღსრულებულიყო. თუმ-

ი X ს–მდე იბერიაში ღვთისმსა-
ართლიანად შეიძლება ენოდოს
ნათარგმნი იყო პირველი ლი-
რომელთაც ქართული ეკლესია
ვფიქრობ, თვით მეფე ვახტანგ
ნელოვანესი შედეგიც, როგორც

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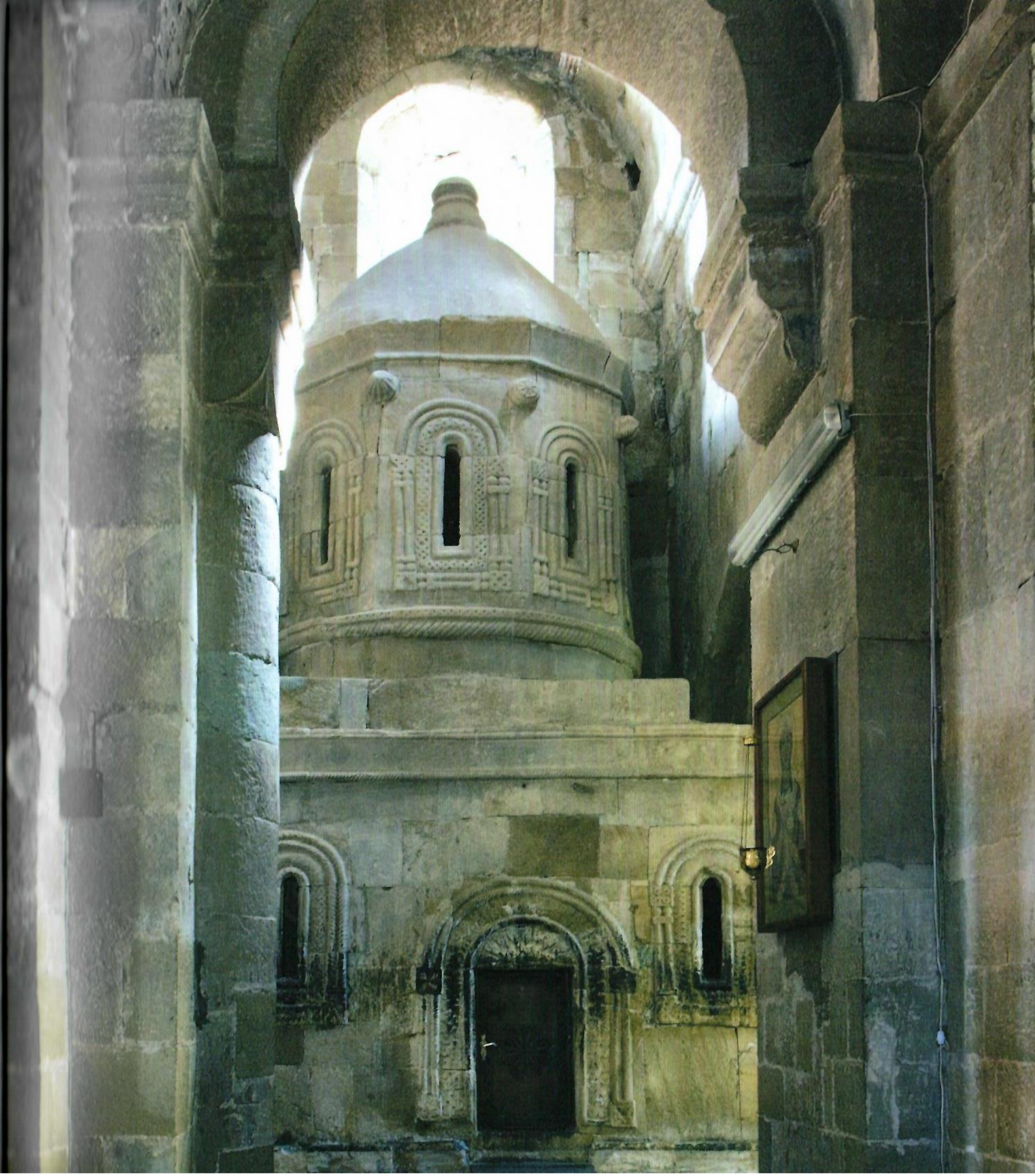
ები", კრებ. მნემე, (თბილისი, 2000),

on of Local Era in Jerusalem", *Israel*
L.Di Segni, *A Georgian Chronological*

nd", *Aram, Palestinian Christianity,*

ნისტს პროფ. ვ. ზაიბტს ანალოგიური
მდე გადმომიგზავნა, რისთვისაც დიდი
das georgische Alphabet geschaffen?"
*omen, Referate des Internationalen*
*nzforschung* Bd. XXVII, (Wien, 2011),

მ საფლავის ეკლესიის რეპლიკა
RAL, HOLY SEPULCHRE CHURCH REPLICA





ანტიოქია ANTIOKIA (ANTIOCH)

ჩანს, ქართლში ღვთისმსახურების იერუსალიმური (ქრისტეს საფლავის ეკლესიის) პრაქტიკისა და ეკლესიაში საღვთისმსახურო ენად ქართულის დამკვიდრება უნდა იყოს. მნიშვნელოვანია აქვე აღინიშნოს, რომ ქართველები ღვთისმსახურებას თავიანთ მშობლიურ ენაზე აღავლენდნენ არა მარტო იბერიაში, არამედ პალესტინაშიც, წმ. საბასა და წმ. თეოდოსის ლავრებში, რაზედაც მოწმობს როგორც წმ. საბა განწმედილის ანდერძი (532 წ.), ასევე წმ. თეოდოსის ბიოგრაფიც (VI ს.)[42].

წმ. ნინოს შემდეგაც იბერიაში კვლავ გრძელდება ქართველთა ახალი იერუსალიმის შექმნაზე ზრუნვა. მეფე ვახტანგ გორგასლის მეფობის დროს (V–VI სს.), ფაქტობრივად, სრულდება იერუსალიმური ღვთისმსახურების დასამკვიდრებლად საფუძვლის მომზადება. ეს საფუძველი კი ლიტურგიკული წიგნების თარგმანის გარდა, ქრისტეს ცხოვრების ამსახველი წმ. ადგილების

42. J.Patrich, "Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism", *Dombarton Oaks Studies* XXXII, 1995, pp. 251, 338; იხ. ასევე: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sancti Sabae*, ed. E. Schwartz, (Leipzig, 1939); Theodorus of Petra, *Vita sancti Theodosii*, ed. H. Usener, (Leipzig, 1890); A.J. Festugière, *Les moines d'Orient, III/2: Les moines de Palestine* (Paris, 1962), 124 n. 291; J.T.Milik, "Notes d'epigraphie et topographie palestiniennes", *Revue biblique* 67, (1960), pp. 354-67; 550-91; იხ. ასევე: კ. კეკელიძე, „ვინ არიან ბესები", *ეტიუდები*, ტ. I, (თბილისი, 1956), გვ. 84-98..

adoption in Kartli of the Jerusalem liturgy of the Ch
of Georgian as a language for Divine Service. I think
liturgies in their native language not only in Iberia, b
Theodosius, which is confirmed by the 532 will of St
St Theodosius[42].

After St Nino, the Georgians made continued effo
Iberia. King Vakhtang Gorgasali of the 5th-6th centurie
rite. His efforts included not only the translation of litu
first in Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Kartli and late
As previously mentioned, the Holy of Holies, i.e.
century on the site where Christ's Chiton had bee
consecrated to the Apostles and became the Mother
of the fifth century, while from the eleventh century
name of Svetitskhoveli.

Facing the first church erected is the Golgotha of th
Nearby are also to be found Gethsemane, Bethleh
Proto-martyr, and the present Antioch in the vicinity
Georgian baptistery, our Jordan.

This is how Mtskheta in the 4th-5th centuries turn
which makes it and its environs unique in the entire C

The connection between the first church, that
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In the 5th century, King Vakhtang Gorgasali, who

42. J.Patrich, 'Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism'
also: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sancti Sabae*, ed. E. Schwartz
ed. H. Usener, (Leipzig, 1890); A.J. Festugière, *Les moines d*
291; J.T.Milik, 'Notes d'epigraphie et topographie palestini
also: K.Keelidze, *vin arian besebi*, etiudebi, t. I, T'bilisi, 195



ANTIOKIA (ANTIOCH)

ლავის ეკლესიის) პრაქტიკისა და
ნდა იყოს. მნიშვნელოვანია აქვე
ბლიურ ენაზე აღავლენდნენ არა
დოსის ლავრებში, რაზედაც მოწ-
. თეოდოსის ბიოგრაფიც (VI ს.)[42].
ლთა ახალი იერუსალიმის შექ-
სს.), ფაქტობრივად, სრულდე-
ვლის მომზადება. ეს საფუძველი
ების ამსახველი წმ. ადგილების

ks Studies XXXII, 1995, pp. 251, 338;
1939); Theodorus of Petra, *Vita sancti*
, *III/2: Les moines de Palestine* (Paris,
s", *Revue biblique* 67, (1960), pp. 354-
ისი, 1956), გვ. 84-98..



adoption in Kartli of the Jerusalem liturgy of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and also the adoption of Georgian as a language for Divine Service. I think it is also important that Georgians officiated their liturgies in their native language not only in Iberia, but also in Palestine, in the lauras of St Saba and St Theodosius, which is confirmed by the 532 will of St Saba, as well as by the biography of the 6th century St Theodosius[42].

After St Nino, the Georgians made continued efforts to create a New Jerusalem for the Georgians in Iberia. King Vakhtang Gorgasali of the 5th-6th centuries, finally completed the grounds for the Jerusalem rite. His efforts included not only the translation of liturgical books, but also the establishment of holy sites first in Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Kartli and later beyond its borders.

As previously mentioned, the Holy of Holies, i.e. Great Zion was founded by St Nino in the fourth century on the site where Christ's Chiton had been buried. In the fifth century the Church became consecrated to the Apostles and became the Mother of All Churches, again in the image of the Jerusalem of the fifth century, while from the eleventh century onwards the church was known by its present day name of Svetitskhoveli.

Facing the first church erected is the Golgotha of the Georgians, i.e. the Mtskheta Holy Cross Monastery. Nearby are also to be found Gethsemane, Bethlehem, Bethany, Tabor, the Church of St Stephen the Proto-martyr, and the present Antioch in the vicinity of which, on the left side of the Mtkvari River, is the Georgian baptistery, our Jordan.

This is how Mtskheta in the 4th-5th centuries turned into a second live Jerusalem for the Georgians, which makes it and its environs unique in the entire Christendom.

The connection between the first church, that of the Holy of Holies, and the Golgotha of the Georgians i.e. the Holy Cross Monastery at Mtskheta is extremely important: historical records give an extensive account of the heavenly miracles related to the two churches, miracles which had also served as reasons for their construction. Throughout the centuries the Georgians maintained a tradition of stational liturgy from the Holy of Holies to the Holy Cross Monastery. Unfortunately, after the loss of Georgia's independence, a military base was set up between the Holy of Holies, Svetitskhoveli and the Mtskheta Holy Cross Monastery, the Golgotha of the Georgians, which did not allow Georgians to practice their centuries-old tradition during seventy years. It was only in 2007, after the withdrawal of the Russian military base from Mtskheta that the Georgian Church succeeded in restoring the ancient feast of the Holy Cross, the 'Aghvsebis Zatikis Zatiki'.

In the 5th century, King Vakhtang Gorgasali, who later was declared a saint, transferred the capital to

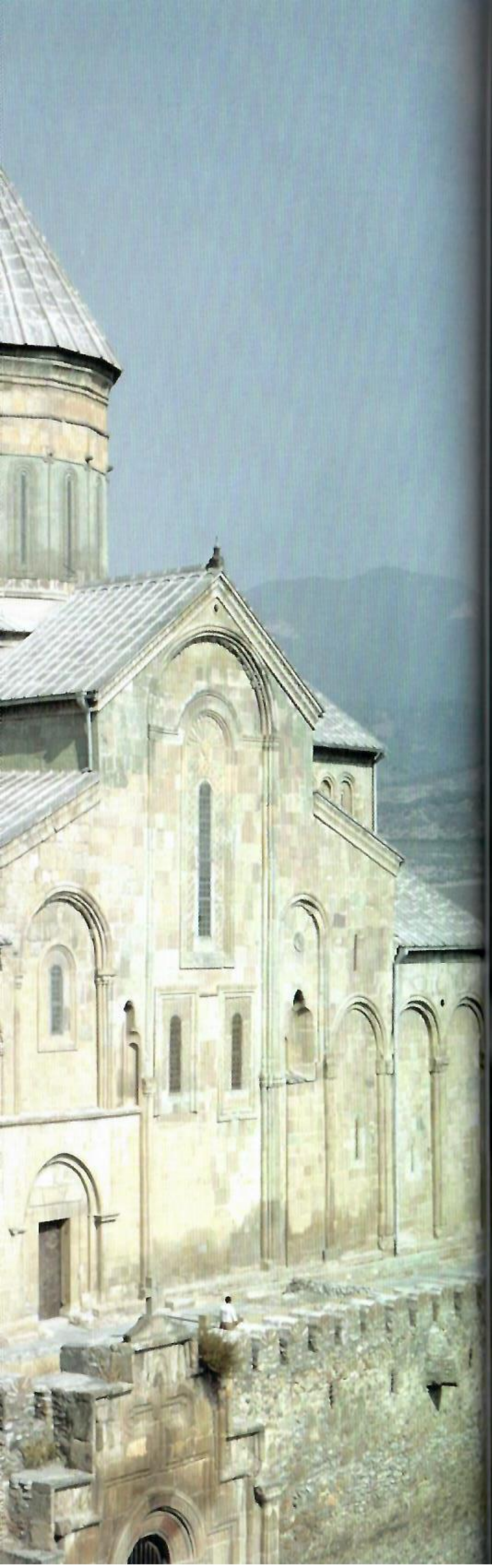
42. J.Patrich, 'Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism', *Dombarton Oaks Studies* XXXII, 1995, pp. 251, 338; see also: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sancti Sabae*, ed. E. Schwartz, (Leipzig, 1939); Theodorus of Petra, *Vita sancti Theodosii*, ed. H. Usener, (Leipzig, 1890); A.J. Festugière, *Les moines d'Orient, III/2: Les moines de Palestine* (Paris, 1962), 124 n. 291; J.T.Milik, 'Notes d'epigraphie et topographie palestiniennes', *Revue biblique* 67, (1960), pp. 354-67; 550-91; see also: K.Keelidze, *vin arian besebi*, etiudebi, t. I, T'bilisi, 1956, pp.84-98.

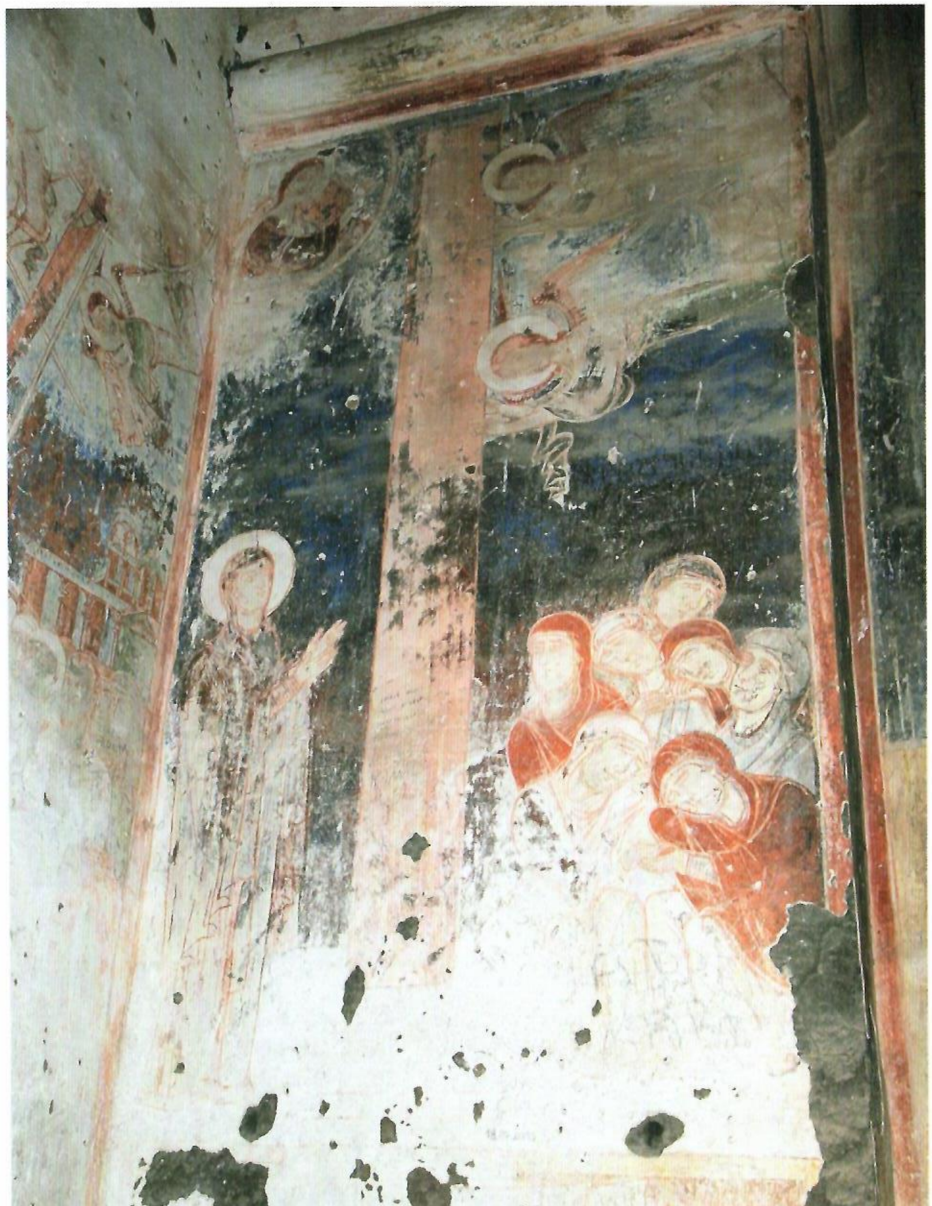




ანისი, ტიგრან ჰონენცის ეკ
ANI, PAINTINGS IN THE C

სვეტიცხოვლის ტაძარი
SVETITSKHOVELI CATHEDRAL





ანისი, ტიგრან ჰონენცის ეკლესიის მოხატულობა, ძელი ცხოველის ამაღლება
ANI, PAINTINGS IN THE CHURCH OF TIGRAN HONENTS, ASCENSION OF THE HOLY PILLAR

დედაქალაქში და შემდეგ უკვე მის ფარგლებს

ვ წმ. ნინოს მიერ უფლის კვართის დაფლვის
ღმოცენდა IV ს-ში. V ს-დან ეს ეკლესია „მოცი-
ათაჲ“ ხდება V ს-ის იერუსალიმის ანალოგიით,
ჲით არის უკვე ცნობილი.
ითა გოლგოთა – მცხეთის ჯვარია აღმართუ-
ი, პირველმოწამე წმ. სტეფანეს ტაძარი, იგივე
დ. მტკვრის მარცხენა ნაპირზე ყოველთა ქარ-

რუსალიმად (IV-V სს-ში), რაც სრულიად გა-
რენს მთელ ქრისტიანულ სამყაროში.
ჲაჲ წმიდათაჲსა“ (პირველი ეკლესია) და მცხე-
ელი კავშირი: ისტორიული წყაროები ვრცლად
რომლებიც ამ ორ ტაძარს უკავშირდებოდა და
ებს საუკუნეების მანძილზე წმ. ქალაქის მსგავ-
თის ჯვარზე“ ლოცვით მსვლელობა. სამწუხა-
ა შემდეგ „წმიდაჲ წმიდათაჲსა“ (დღევანდელი
გოლგოთა) შორის გამყოფ ზღუდედ საბჭოთა
ეის მანძილზე ქართველ კაცს საშუალებას არ
ლესიამ მხოლოდ რუსული ბაზების მცხეთიდან
მირებული უძველესი ჯვრის დღესასწაულის -

ქართველოს სატახტო ქალაქი თბილისში გა-
ტეს მიწიერი ცხოვრების ამსახველი წმ. ადგი-
ე. ამ გზით მან მცხეთა საქართველოს სულიერ
დაც დღემდე მირონი იხარშება და სრულიად
ზიან.
ეება, ალბათ, უფრო მეტად პოლიტიკური ხა-
მ. დედაქალაქი მცხეთა – ქართველთა ახალი
მართლაც ასე მოხდა, განსხვავებით წმ. ქალაქ
ეა ძარცვა, დარბევა და აოხრებაც და მის და-
ელდება.



მცხეთა MTSKHETA

Tbilisi where, in the image of Mtskheta, he founded holy places reflecting the early life of Christ. These churches, replicas of those in Mtskheta, were used for officiating the Jerusalem liturgy. He retained Mtskheta as a spiritual capital and catholicate where kings used to be consecrated. Myrrh is still boiled to produce chrism, and the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia has been consecrated here ever since.

In my view, this decision by Vakhtang Gorgasali was mostly a political one intended to protect the original holy capital Mtskheta, the New Jerusalem of the Georgians, from devastation caused by constant warfare. The Holy City of Jerusalem had a different fate: not only did it undergo numerous invasions aiming at its subjugation, but these, unfortunately, continue to the present day.

# Otkhta Eklesia*

## New Temple of Solomon, New Zion or Both?

### Introduction

Tao and Klarjeti are historical provinces of Georgia, which now are part of Turkey and are therefore referred to as 'Turkish Georgia' by some scholars[1].

Ecclesiastical building in the region began around the year 350[2]. One of the most prolific was the period of the reign of King Vakhtang Gorgasali of the 5th-6th centuries[3]. However, after the Arab rule in the 7th-8th centuries these provinces, like other regions, were left devastated and deserted. It was not until the end of the 8th century that the provinces began to revive under the leadership of secular authorities, namely representatives of the royal house of the Bagrationi, on the one hand, and through a large-scale monastic rebuilding campaign initiated by Grigol Khandzteli or Gregory of Khandzta, on the other[4].

In the late 8th century, the Bagrationi family left the areas conquered by the Arabs to find shelter in Tao-Klarjeti in south-west Georgia and eventually moved the capital of Iberia, the Eastern Georgian Kingdom, from Tbilisi to Artanuji. According to W. Djobadze, 'Klarjeti and Tao principalities turned into a political centre from which powerful Bagrationis started the restoration of Georgia's independence and, by the end of the 10th century, succeeded in establishing a consolidated Georgian state'[5].

The formation of a unified state required a spiritual and cultural revival, which was undertaken by Grigol Khandzteli through the establishment of monastic centres and scriptoria. His hagiographer, the

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* Otkhta Eklesia – Dört Kilise in Turkish.

1. Г.Казбек, *Три месяца в Турецкой Грузии*, in *Записки Кавказского отделения Императорского русского географического общества*, кн. 10, ч. I, Тифлис, 1876. The same work in Georgian: G.Qazbegi, *sami t've t'urk'et'is sak'art'veloshi*, Bat'umi, 1995.

2. D.Xoshtaria, *klarjet'is eklesiebi da monastrebi*, T'bilisi, 2005, p.25; *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, ed. by S. Qauxch'ishvili, vol. I (T'bilisi, 1955), p.131.

3. D.Xoshtaria, *klarjet'is eklesiebi da monastrebi*, T'bilisi, 2005, pp. 29-36; ; *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, vol. I, pp.117, 131, 178.

4. See: *cmida grigol xandzt'eli*, R.Siradzis, Gr.P'arulavas, M.Tuskias redak'ciit', T 'bilisi, 2006.

5. W.Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klardjeti and Šavšeti*, Stuttgart, 1992; The same work in Georgian: V.Jobadze, *adreuli shua saukuneebis k'art'uli monastrebi istoriul taoshi, klarjet'sa da shavshet'shi*, T'bilisi, 2006, p.15 (Below I will refer to the Georgian version of V. Djobadze's book).

რივია, აუცილებელი იყო ასევე ქვეყ-
რაც წმ. გრიგოლ ხანძთელმა ითავა
ობო ცენტრების დაფუძნებით. მისივე აგიო-
ბი ქართული სახელმწიფოს საფუძვლების
ლ ხანძთელის „ცხორებაშია" შემონახული:
იცა შინა ქართულითა ენითა ჟამი შეიწირვის
ბას დღესაც არ დაუკარგავს მნიშვნელობა.
ლ ხანძთელის „ცხორების" ტექსტი დაწერ-
, რომელიც XI საუკუნით თარიღდება, 1902
რის წიგნსაცავში აღმოაჩინა და შეისწავლა
ეზე მწირი ცნობები გვექნებოდა არა მარტო
ციათა კულტურულ-სამწერლობო კერების

ლოსთვის იგივე იყო, რაც ცნობილი ტურ
ისათვის, სადაც მრავალი უმნიშვნელოვა-
თაგან უძველესი 394 წლით თარიღდება[8].
ჩეული კერა იყო სირიული ქრისტიანობისა.
თული ისტორიული პროვინციები ქვეყნის
ღმოსავლეთით. უცნაურია, მაგრამ თითქოს
– ანტიოქიის ეკლესიებს ამ მხარეში.
-XII საუკუნეებია, როდესაც აქ ქართული
ი შორის, ალბათ, სრულიად გამორჩეულია
ლმწიფოს დამაარსებელთაგან ერთ-ერთის,
ენლის დავით კურაპალატის ზეობის დროს

ს ვიმოწმებ ქართული თარგმანის მიხედვით).
გნი I, ილ.აბულაძის რედაქციით, თბ., 1964, გვ. 290.
ıского, введение, издание, перевод, Тексты и
11.
nded ed. by M.M. Mango, London, 1982; A.Palmer,
bdin, Cambridge, 1990.
7, გვ. 18-21; ვ.ჯობაძე, ადრეული შუა საუკუნეების





10th century Giorgi Merchule gives a definiton of the fundamentals of the united Georgian state, which survives in *The Life of St Grigol Khandzteli:* 'And Kartli consists of that spacious land in which the liturgy and all prayers are said in the Georgian language'[6]. I think, the formula remains relevant to the present day. It is also important to note that the text of the *Life of St Grigol Khandzteli* was written in 951 and the sole manuscript exists, which dates from the 11th century, was discovered in the book depository of the Holy Cross monastery in Jerusalem and studied by N. Marr in autumn 1902. If it had not been for this discovery, we would hardly know anything, not only about the history of this province, but neither about its cultural centres and scriptoria[7].

Tao-Klarjeti, this 'Georgian Sinai' meant the same for Georgia as the renowned Tur Abdin, 'Mountain of the Servants of God' for the Church of Antioch, which incorporated a large number of important churches and monasteries, the earliest of which dates from 394[8]. Tur Abdin was as distinguished a centre of Syrian Christianity as was Tao-Klarjeti for Georgia. Both are now part of Turkey with Georgian provinces being located to the north-west of the country and the Syrian to the south-east. Oddly enough, the Georgian Church and its mother the Antiochian Church shared the same fate in this region.

The period between the 10th and 13th century was the heyday of Tao-Klarjeti. It was during this time that a variety of highly valuable works were created, among which particular note must be made of Otkhta Eklesia. The church was built and adorned with paintings during the reign of Davit Kuropalates (961-1001), the founder of the consolidated Georgian state and a brilliant representative of the Bagrationi house of Tao[9].

Numerous noteworthy studies, including those on the architecture and murals of Otkhta Eklesia have been published in the last two decades, after Georgian scholars were granted access to the Tao-Klarjeti sites. This is in marked contrast to the Soviet period, when even the thought of visiting the area would have been inconceivable. I had long dreamt to see the churches and their paintings, more so that I was well aware of the manuscripts copied in these provinces, one of the most important being the liturgical-homiletic collection, *Klarjeti Polycephalon*, which I even published in 1991[10].

Yet, it was not until the summer 2008 that I managed to travel to Tao-Klarjeti together with my grandsons, Guka and Sandro, and a colleague from Jerusalem, Professor Gustav Kühnel. My dream seemed

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6. *Dzveli k'art'uli agiograp'iuli literaturis dzeglebi*, cigni I, ed. by Il.Abuladze, T'bilisi, 1964, p. 290.

7. Н. Марр, *Георгий Мерчул, Житие св.Григория Хандзтийского, введение, издание, перевод, Тексты и разыскания по армяно-грузинской филологии*, кн. VII , СПБ, 1911.

8. G.Bell, *The Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin*, expended edn. by M.M.Mango, London, 1982; A.Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The early history of Tur Abdin*, Cambridge, 1990.

9. T'.Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, T'bilisi, 2007, pp.18-21; V.Jobadze, *adreuli shua saukuneebis k'art'uli monastrebi*, pp. 192-194.

10. T'.Magloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, T'bilisi, 1991.



OTKHTA EKLESIA, NORTH FAÇADE

ა თავისივე წარწერით — „სიონი“ — ზეცი-
აა; თუმცა იგი ასევე არ გამორიცხავს, რომ
მ. ქალაქ იერუსალიმს უკავშირდება. ხოლო
ების, მისი ღმრთისმშობლისადმი მიძღვნის

ა შესახებ. საქართველოს ეკლესიის, ქართული
ს საკითხები, თბ., 1995, გვ.316-322; ე.პრივალოვა,



to come true, but, regrettably, my excitement was marred by the war launched in Georgia.

The same summer, by a strange coincidence, Marika Didebulidze, my colleague, presented me with a collection of unedited works entitled *From the History of Georgian Painting*[11] by the renowned Georgian scholar, Tinatin Virsaladze, published in 2007 by the Chubinashvili Georgian Art History Research Centre. The book contains historical and art historical analyses of three sites, including that of Otkhta Eklesia[12].

The editors of this brilliant publication, who were colleagues of Tina Virsaladze, conclude the book with the following words: 'It is without doubt that the collection of the works of the great - let us at least now dare use this epithet - scholar will not only enrich our knowledge of the Middle Ages, but will also guide many of the current and future researchers.'[13]

This, I can say, held true for me. The publication prompted me to produce research on a small, yet highly important mural fragment from Otkhta Eklesia.

## History of the Research Undertaken on a Medallion from Otkhta Eklesia

The painting adorning the sanctuary window of the church, the theological essence of which is the subject matter of this paper, belongs to the fourth of the five registers of paintings in the basilica and is unique in terms of its content. The painting is emphasized by an image of a holy woman holding a church model, which is set in a medallion adorning the central part of the apse window. The image has yielded controversial opinions in scholarly literature. I will hereby attempt to outline briefly the history of the study of this fragment:

The initial analysis of the fragment was made by E. Takaishvili, who identified the image as a donor.[14]

According to N. and J. M. Thierry, this is an image of the 4$^{th}$ century Saint, Queen Nana, the first Christian Queen of Iberia and the Christian name of the queen must have been Nino. 'Nino' was by mistake read instead of 'Sioni' which in Georgian means Zion due to which the basilica was considered to have been dedicated to her[15].

11. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*.
12. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, pp.17-47.
13. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p.7.
14. Е.Такаишвили, *Археологическая экспедиция 1917 года в южные провинции Грузии*, Тбилиси, 1952, с. 85-86.
15. N.et J.M.Thierry, 'Notes d'un nouveau voyage en Géorgie Turque', *Bedi Kartlisa, Revue de Kartvélologie*, vol. XXV, 1968, p. 62-63 ; N.et J.M.Thierry, 'Peintures du Xe siècle en Georgie Méridionale et leurs rapports avec la peinture Byzantine d' Asie Mineure', *Cahiers archéologiques*, vol. XXIV, 1975, pp. 73-113 ; N. Thierry, 'Le souverain dans les programmes d' églises en Cappadoce et en Géorgie du Xe au XIIIe siècle', *Revue des études géorgiennes et*

The inscription accompanying the aforementioned mural fragment was correctly read by W. Djobadze as 'Zion'. Therefore, the scholar considered the painting to be an allegorical image of Holy Zion or heavenly Jerusalem[16].

N. Aleksidze and D. Khoshtaria interpreted this image as Holy Sophia – holy wisdom – as they read Holy Sophia instead of Holy Sioni or Holy Zion[17].

E. Privalova asserted that the image of a holy woman and the accompanying inscription 'Zion' personify heavenly Jerusalem; though she did not rule out that it could be the Mother of all Churches, which is associated with the earthly holy city of Jerusalem. The inscription 'Zion', according to the scholar, could be indicative of the name of the church and its dedication to the Virgin[18].

The same fresco became the subject matter of research conducted by Z. Skhirtladze in 1995. The scholar attempted to prove, in the view of the vast material analysed by him, that this was the image of 'Holy Zion', which is the Mother of all Churches[19] of heavenly Jerusalem. Marika Didebulidze holds the same viewpoint.[20] Later, Zaza Skhirtladze changed some aspects of his assumption, but, in my opinion, this time his viewpoint is not completely clear: 'firstly, the personification of Zion should be seen in this type of images on the church frescos. The church, which is regarded as the symbolic figure of the mother church, undoubtedly is the image of Otkhta Eklesia Basilica, but at the same time, it has another concept – the image of the church founded by the Lord and his apostles... There is nothing strange in Davit's (Davit Kuropalates) aspiration to see the image of Zion in the Basilica built by his will and effort and have himself presented as a great ruler like Moses, Melchizedek, David, Solomon or Constantine'[21].

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*caucasiennes*, n. 4, 1988, pp. 138-139.

16. V.Jobadze, *adreuli shua saukuneebis k'art'uli monastrebi*, pp. 201-210 ; V.Jobazde, 'Shenishvnebi ot'xt'a eklesishi sionis alegoriuli gamosaxulebis siuxvis rk'ebis shesaxeb', *literatura da xelovneba*, T'bilisi, 1999, pp.69-78 ; V.Jobazde, 'ot'xt'a eklesiis ert'i gamosaxulebis arsis shec'nobist'vis', *axlo aghmosavlet'i da sak'art'velo*, IV, T'bilisi, 2005, pp.257-259.

17. N.Alek'sidze, D.Xoshtaria, *axali c'nobebi tao-klarjet'is sidzvelet'a shesaxeb*, literatura da xelovneba, n.1. T'bilisi, 1991, pp.137-142; N.Alek'sidze, *ot'xt'a eklesiis moxatulobis t'eologiuri sap'udzvlebi*, literatura da xelovneba, n.4, T'bilisi, 1991, pp.103-123.

18. E.Privalova, 'zogi ram tao-klarjet'is moxatulobis shesaxeb', *saqart'velos eklesiis, qartuli sasuliero mwerlobisa da k'ristianuli xelovnebis istoriis sakit'xebi*, T'bilisi, 1995, pp.316-322; E.Privalova, 'zogiert'i shenishvna tao-klarjet'is moxatulobat 'a shesaxeb', *celicdeuli*, II, T'bilisi, 1996, pp. 5-14.

19. Z.Skhirtladze, 'Mother of all Churches: Remarques on the Iconographic Programme of the Apse Decoration of Dort Kilise', in *Cahiers Archeologiques*, XLIII, 1995, pp.101-116

20. M.Didebulidze, *ot'xt'a eklesia*, (unpublished work).

21. Z.Sxirtladze, 'ierusalimi-at'oni-tao, davit' kurapalatis sak'titoro ghvacli da ot'xt'a eklesia', *bizantinologia sak'art'veloshi*, 2, T 'bilisi, 2009, pp.707, 714. see: Z.Sxirtladze, *ot'xt'a eklesiis p'reskebi*, T'bilisi, 2009, pp.122-153.

R. Siradze claimed that in Georgia the idea of Holy Sophia was related to the churches dedicated to the Virgin – 'Zion'. The author explains his ideas in the following way: 'the Georgian churches dedicated to the Virgin presuppose the presence of holy wisdom or 'Hagia Sophia'[22].

## Tinatin Virsaladze's Views on the Fresco Medallion

Before starting an analysis of the aforementioned fresco medallion adorning Otkhta Eklesia, I feel obliged to present a full description of this fragment offered by T. Virsaladze, which, to my mind, goes beyond the scope of scholarly analysis and allows us to attribute this extract, as well as the entire work, to the genre of a literary-scholarly essay. It is hardly conceivable how she achieved such a broad understanding of the monument and its separate details without having visited the site; she never having had an opportunity to do so, based her opinions on presumably low-quality photos available at that time. She appears to have developed a vision of these sites across the centuries as well as a feel for the state of mind of the builders and painters, which she managed to present in a lively manner. Her impressive style of rendering scholarly thought reminds me of the style of my teacher, Elene Metreveli, who belonged to the same generation of scholars as T. Virsaladze. While the latter's research was focused on and inspired by ecclesiastical architecture and paintings, E. Metreveli succeeded to the same extent in bringing alive the culture of Georgia and the history of separate scriptoria or monasteries, often by analyzing a small note or a colophone preserved in a manuscript. The study of the paintings and the history of the Holy Cross Monastery in Jerusalem, carried out by both scholars[23], for me personally, is a model of talent, professionalism and scholarly ethics, even in the case of conflicting opinions[24].

Now let me return to the aforementioned painting adorning the window of the sanctuary of Otkhta Eklesia. I will hereby quote a detailed and an impressive description of this section given by Tina Virsaladze, as I do not think I would be able to offer a better description:

'The arch of a large window, widely open towards the church nave, bears a round medallion featuring a bust image of a holy woman clad in a royal attire and holding a church model. The saint supports the church with her covered left hand and circles the corners of the church with her right hand. The face and the right hand have turned dark because of paint deterioration and the face is also damaged. Despite this, it is still possible to discern the long oval shape of the face which appears even longer along the chin owing to the missing light line on the neck and even the arcs of the eyebrows

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22. R.Siradze, kultura da saxismetqveleba, T'bilisi, 2008, pp. 57-74.

23. El.Metreveli, *masalebi ierusalimis k'art'uli koloniis istoriisat'vis*, T'bilisi, 1962; Т.Вирсаладзе, *Роспись Иерусалимского Крестного Монастыря и Портрет Шота Руставели*, Тб., 1974.

24. E.Metreveli refused to complete and publish her critical review of a book on the paintings in the Holy Cross Monastery by T.Virsaladze after the death of the latter, despite her fundamentally different viewpoint.

ურროთმოძღვრული ტიპის გვირგვინი
ლიკის ფორმას, მის საფასადო თაღ-
ნის ფონი ლურჯია, მას ყვავილოვანი
ი რქაა, მათგან ამომავალი ფაშფაშა,
ა (ოქრა) და ძვირფასი თვლებითაა
ანილია წარწერა „ს[ი]ონი“[25].
ენიშნა, ბაზილიკის საკურთხევლის
ურის მოხატულობის უკეთ გაგები-
ებრივია, შინაარსით ერთმანეთთან
რონის – შესახებ უკვე მოგახსენეთ.
აღწერით წარმოგიდგენთ:
ეიზაჟში მოქცეული, ფიგურის გამო-
არმეტყველს სინას მთაზე სჯულის
რმიქცეული და დაბურვილი ხელე-
რჯვენას. მოსეს თეთრი კვართი და
ვერდით ვერტიკალური, თეთრათი
უნდოვნად ჩანს პატარა რგოლიც,
მ. ტიერები მას სიტყვა AGIOS–ის

ი, მოსეს ძმაა წარმოდგენილი (და
ი ფიქრობენ)[27]. იგი ტაძრისა ანდა
ვეტებზე მეწამული კრეტსაბმელი
რია, განზე გაწეულ მარჯვენაში კი,
ლი მოსავს – თვლებით მოოჭვილი
ება ძალზე უახლოვდება აარონის

ბენ დანარჩენი მეცნიერებიც, რომელთაც
ეკის გამოსახულება იყო. იგი აღნიშნავს,
ა მასზე დაწყობილი ნივთების არსებობა.
ს მარჯვნივ მდგომი იდუმალი ფიგურაც.



ოთხთა ეკლესია, აღმოსავლეთი ფასადი

OTKHTA EKLESIA, EAST FAÇADE

ოს №20 ამპულაზე“[28].
ს აფსიდის მოხატულობის მეოთხე რეგის-
დ უკვე საკურთხევლის აფსიდის კედლე-
მღვდელმთავართა გამოსახულებებია მო-
ოთხ-ოთხი წინასწარმეტყველია, მერე კი
და სოლომონ წინასწარმეტყველნი დგანან
თი და მუქი წითელი მოსასხამი აცვია, და-
ა ჰიმატიონები მოსავთ“[29].
დ აღნიშნავს, ბევრია „არაჩვეულებრივი“[30].
ბაზილიკის აფსიდის დიდი სარკმლის
ი წმ. დედის გამოსახულებით, რომელსაც
გამოსახულება გასაღებია არა მარტო ამ
ებად, არამედ ბაზილიკის სახელწოდების

დავიწყებ და შევეცდები ასევე ბაზილიკის
რესო IV რეგისტრის სამივე ნაწილის არ-
კვლევას ეფუძნება და მის გაგრძელებას
ბათ, დასრულებულად არც კი მიაჩნდა და
იქვა, იგი მხოლოდ ახლახანს გამოიცა).
მული წმ. დედის გამოსახულებაა, ხელში

ბის მოხმობით, აი, როგორ ხსნის ამ გამო-

ვე მოხატულობის საერთო შინაარსიდან
აოფიას გამოსახულებას“[33].
ძალზე საინტერესოა აღინიშნოს, რომ



and the straight nose with a loop between the eyebrows. The hair now seems light on the picture, but this may also be the result of the weathering of the paint. The clothes of the saint are grayish blue with a circular ornament and a collar embroidered with jewels; thrown over it is a semi-transparent coat, which is done up with a fibula around the shoulder. The hair is supported with a blue net and the head is adorned with a fantastic crown of an architectural type. Held by a holy woman, the church model displays the basilica design of Otkhta Eklesia, namely its facade arcade. The halo has signs of gilding. The background of the medallion is blue and is surrounded with a twisted floral frame. On each side the medallion is flanked by a horn of abundance from which plump, light green leafy shoots emanate; the horns are of gold ochre and are adorned with gems. There is an inscription in white letters 'S[i]oni' (Zion) against the blue background'.[25]

As mentioned, this image of Holy Zion belongs to the fourth register of the sanctuary painting. For facilitating the interpretation, I have divided the mural into three parts, which are closely linked to each other in terms of their content. I have already dealt with the first part - Holy Zion. As regards the second part, I will again quote from the description provided by T. Virsaladze:

'The window jambs are filled with two figures placed in a mountainous, architectural landscape; the south jamb shows the presentation of tablets to Moses the prophet on Mount Sinai. Up the slope, grasped with fear and with covered hands Moses accepts tablets from the right arm extending from the sky. Moses is clad in a white robe and a gold himation: the mountain is engulfed in red tongues of flames. Next to it is a vertical inscription in asomtavruli (Georgian majuscule) letters executed with tetra: 'Moses'. Above, a small ring can be seen a letter vaguely reminding one of the Greek 'A'. N. and J. M. Thierry interpreted this as a contraction of the word ΑΓΙΟΣ...'[26]

'The north jamb displays Aaron the High Priest, brother of Moses and not Melchizedek king of Salem, as N. and J. M. Thierry asserted[27]. He stands before a temple or a martyrion, which is indicated by a purple veil on the narrow pillars of the purgatory. In his left hand Aaron has the Ark of the Covenant, and most likely it is an incense burner in his right hand held cross-wide. He wears clerical clothes – a diadem adorned with jewels, a robe, a dress and a shirt. With its details, the image has a close affinity with Aaron's representations in Kiev's Holy Sophia's mosaic and Bobio ampoule No20'[28].

This is how T. Virsaladze describes the third part of the fourth register paintings: 'in the same

25. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 25.

26. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 25.

27. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 25. Other scholars, who had worked on this site, are of the same opinion. Only. W. Djobadze doubted the proposition that it was Melchizedek. He noted that while visiting the site, he failed to establish the presence of a paten and objects placed on it. In addition to this, a mysterious figure standing next to Melchizedek is also to be taken into account when analyzing the composition. see: Jobadze, adreuli shua saukuneebis k'art'uli monastrebi, p.191.

28. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 26.

register, but this time on the walls of the sanctuary apse are shown the images of the prophets and high priests in rows – first come four prophets, and then four high priests on each side of the window. First towards the window are David and Solomon the prophets in royal attire – Solomon has a light green robe and a dark red cape, while the remaining six prophets are clad in ancient tunics and himatia'[29].

Otkhta Eklesia, as Tina Virsaladze has rightly noted, is 'unusual'[30] in many ways. Yet, to my mind, what is the most unusual is the medallion with the image of a holy woman with a church model, set in the central part of the jamb of a large window of the basilica[31]. This image is a key not only to the understanding of the essence of the paintings adorning the sanctuary of the church, but also to the elucidation of the name of the basilica[32].

I will begin by explaining the content of the medallion and will try to have an insight into the essence of each of the three parts of the fourth register of wall paintings. The research essentially builds on and continues the research carried out by T. Virsaladze. It is my understanding that Tina Virsaladze did not consider her research completed and therefore postponed its publication.

The first part of the painting contains a holy woman holding a church model set in a medallion.

Drawing numerous interesting parallels, T. Virsaladze gives the following interpretation of the image:

'Considering the context of the image, as well as the overall content of the paintings, we identify the fresco as an image of Holy Sophia'[33].

This seems to be a plausible explanation. It is of note that the inscription in the medallion was first deciphered by T. Virsaladze as 'Ç, S, O, I' the letters making up the Georgian words for Holy Sophia, 'Tsmida Sopio'. Later, however, a better-quality photo provided by N. and J.M. Thierry allowed her to suggest a new, more exact reading – 'Holy Zion', but she still adhered to the opinion that the basilica was dedicated to Holy Sophia.[34]

T. Virsaladze did know that Georgian ecclesiastical tradition relates 'Zion' to the Dormition and that all churches dedicated to this feast are called 'Sioni' (Zion) in Georgia to the present day. Yet, the scholar also rightly noted that the personification of the church in the image of a divine queen is far from being characteristic of Georgian art. According to her, 'a fresco at Ishkhani, which is a copy of the one at Otkhta Eklesia, provides evidence against such an interpretation'.[35] Here, a holy woman is depicted on a window

29. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 26.
30. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 28.
31. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 28.
32. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 28.
33. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 29.
34. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 29-43.
35. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 29.

of the north arm, among a row of other saints. It is obvious that the image is neither of the Virgin nor of the Church and it represents a concrete saint – Holy Sophia, the wisdom of the Lord, which 'has built her house'[36].

According to T. Virsaladze, neither inscriptions, nor written records contain any evidence as to whom the church was dedicated. Yet, upon conducting a detailed analysis of the paintings, the scholar rightly assumed that the church was dedicated to Holy Sophia. She also noted that this was a unique case as neither before nor after constructing the basilica of Otkhta Eklesia, did anyone dedicate a church in Georgia to Holy Sophia[37].

## Holy Sophia or Holy Zion?

The aforementioned diverse opinions about the name and the paintings of Otkhta Eklesia in scholarly literature may be explained only by the one reason and that is the inscription set within the fresco medallion, where 'Sioni' (Zion) is read. That the inscription should be read as Zion is without doubt. Even nowadays despite grave damage, it can be read clearly, as I could examine upon visiting the place myself.

The question that naturally follows is how shall we explain the presence of the inscription 'Zion' in the Church of Holy Sophia and how are 'Holy Sophia' and 'Zion' interrelated?

In this light, it is extremely important to refer to the definition of Holy Sophia-divine wisdom - as given in Holy Scripture.

### NEW TESTAMENT:

**I.** According to the New Testament, divine wisdom[38] is an attribute of the second member of the Holy Trinity, Christ-Logos, who received it from God[39]:

'But of him that are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom...' (1 Cor. 1, 30).

St Paul refers to Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God:

'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But

36. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 29.

37. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 43.

38. It is interesting that in the comments on the New Testament, the pillar on which Christ was crucified, is the source of wisdom. See: Corinthians, 6.; *Толковая Библия или комментарии на все книги Св. Писания Ветхого и Нового Завета*, Стокгольм, 1987, т.3. стр. 22.

39. Mark, 1.10; Luke 4,18. See also: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian church*, ed. F.L.Cross, E.A.Livingston, Oxford, 1997, p. 1755.

ეა. დაკლა თავისი საკლავი, გაზავა თავისი
ევლები, გადასძახა ქალაქის მაღლობები-
ემი განზავებული ღვინო"... იგავნი სოლო-

ილობისა და გვიან ანტიკური ხელოვნების
იყალიბდა[42]:

ოგოსი, რომლის თვისებაც არის სიბრძნე,
მი საუბარია ქრისტეს სხვადასხვა სახით
ხევარფიგურის შემცველი მედალიონი და

განასახიერებს თვით თვისებას სიბრძნი-
დაკავშირებით ქ-ნი თინა შენიშნავს, რომ
ქრისტესაა გაიგივებული, ასე მაგ: ალე-
სკაზე ანგელოზის გამოსახულებას ახლავს
ში კი ანგელოზის გამოსახულება ცალკე,
ვანკერძოებული თვისება სიბრძნისა[46].
გამოსახვა[47]. ქ-ნი თინას აზრით, ამ ტიპს
მედალიონის გამოსახულებაც[48]. რაც შე-
ბიბლიურ იგავს: „სიბრძნემან იშენა თა-
და უბრძანა თჳსთა მონათა განუმზადონ

ოთა ეკლესიის მედალიონში მოთავსე-

ковая Библия, т.1, გვ.450, სქ. 22-31.



unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the wishdom of God' (1 Cor. 1, 23-24).

## OLD TESTAMENT

**I.** According to the Old Testament, the holy wisdom – 'Sophia wisdom of God' is an idea of the universe in general, which preceded the creation of the world by God[40]:

'The LORD brought me [wisdom] forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old;... When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world...' (Proverbs of Solomon, 8, 1-36).

**II.**According to the comments on the Old Testament, the divine wisdom is a great artist, creator and builder, who built a house, a temple of God, domain of the Lord[41]:

'Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city: ... Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed...' (Proverbs, 9, 1-5).

Biblical books, centuries-old Christian literature and late Antique art yielded three iconographic types of Holy Sophia[42]:

***The first type*** – the second member of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Logos, whose attribute is wisdom and who is a teacher of Logos[43]. What is meant here are the various representations of Christ, e.g. Christ – the priest, a medallion containing a half-figure of Christ, etc.[44].

***The second type*** – Sophia angel, which is an incarnation of wisdom belonging to Logos. In respect to this type of wisdom, T. Virsaladze noted that in certain cases, angel representations were equaled with Christ, as for instance, a 6th-8th century fresco adorning the catacombs near Alexandria contains an inscription, which reads as 'Sophia – Jesus Christ'[45]. In another case, an angel is portrayed next to Christ, as an isolated attribute of wisdom [46].

40. *Толковая Библия*, т.1, кн. Притчей Соломоновых, стр. 450.

41. *Толковая Библия*, т.1, кн. Притчей Соломоновых, стр. 452.

42. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, pp. 30-34.

43. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 30. *Толковая Библия*, т.1, кн. Притчей Соломоновых,стр. 452, п. 22-31.

44. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, pp. 30-31.

45. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 31.

46. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 31

***The third type*** – a female personification of Holy Sophia[47]. According to T. Virsaladze, the image displayed in the medallion at Otkhta Eklesia considered in this paper belongs to this very type[48]. As regards the content conveyed, it is based on the Biblical story referred to above: 'Wisdom has built her house; she has supported it with seven pillars and ordered her maids to prepare the table for the lovers of wisdom'[49].

I think T. Virsaladze's conclusion, identifying the image of a holy woman set in the medallion as Holy Sophia, is quite obvious. The material[50] supporting this assumption broadly considered by her further attests this supposition. The most notable of the works drawn by her is a similar fresco adorning the Holy Cross Monastery in Jerusalem[51].

The fresco from the Holy Cross Monastery in Jerusalem shows Holy Sophia as a 'female-personification' clad in rich attire and with a diadem on her head before a building with seven pillars[52]. Like the image presented in the medallion of Otkhta Eklesia, this fresco should be attributed to the third iconographic type of Holy Sophia. Yet, if the fresco at Holy Cross Monastery bears an inscription adequate to the third iconographic type 'wisdom has built her house'[53], the same type of an image at Otkhta Eklesia has a seemingly strange inscription – 'Sioni' (Zion).

To clarify further the identification of the aforementioned image of Holy Sophia as 'Zion', I find it necessary to take into account not only the meanings of 'Zion' given in Holy Scripture, but also the material evidenced in other hagiographic and liturgical works.

First let us consider the definitions of 'Zion' given in Holy Scripture:

**1. 'Zion'** – the oldest and tallest hill to the south-west of the holy city:

'Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgements;
Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers.' (Ps, 48, 11-13).

**2. 'Zion'** – the citadel of Jerusalem, the city of David:

'But David seized the fortress of Zion. This is the city of David.' (2 Kgs. 5,7).

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47. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 33.
48. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, pp. 33-43.
49. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 30.
50. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, pp. 30-43.
51. .Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, pp. 33-34; Т.Вирсаладзе, *Роспись иерусалимского Крестного Монастыря*, Тб., 1973, p. 15,.таб. XIX. This fresco was removed from the wall during archaeological excavations and alleged restoration work during 1970-71, as well as many other frescos, the majority of which are now lost. Only four pieces were transferred to Georgia and the other four are kept in three museums in the USA. In 2002, I found the fresco described in this article in the cellar of the Holy Cross Monastery. At that time, it was in a poor state of preservation. At present, I do not know if it is still there.
52. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 33-34.
53. V.Tzaferis, *The Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, 1987, p. 38.

**3. a) 'Zion'** – in general, the holy city of Jerusalem:

'For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle there and possess it.' (Ps. 69, 36).

**b) 'Zion'** – the holy city of Jerusalem, where Jehovah, the Lord of the Israelis governs:

'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.'(Ps. 48, 1-2).

**4. 'Zion'** – heavenly Jerusalem:

'But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.' (Heb. 12,22).

**5. 'Zion'** – the mountain of the temple:

'Upon this all the host assembled themselves together, and went up into Mount Zion. And when they saw the sanctuary desolate, and altar profaned, and the gates burned up...' (1 Mac, 4, 37-38).

'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.' (Ps. 2,6).

It thus appears evident that according to Holy Scripture, 'Zion' is not only a mountain to the south-west of the holy city and the city of David in general, but also a holy city – earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. But what is most notable in respect with Otkhta Eklesia is that Zion also denotes a mountain of the temple, a house of the Lord[54].

In addition to the aforementioned Biblical definitions of 'Holy Sophia' and 'Holy Zion', it is also important to note that in oriental Christendom 'Holy Sophia' was considered as a proto-image of the wisdom of Solomon from the Old Testament, owing to which Holy Sophia was sometimes equated with King Solomon as he was gifted with wisdom by God. Also, the temple, built by Holy Sophia in accordance with the Old Testament, turned into a prototype of the temple of Solomon and also of the Christian Church in the historical context, while the table made of wisdom was identified with the Holy Communion[55].

The meaning of 'Holy Zion', as we have seen, is the mountain of the temple, the house of Jehovah and a temple from the Old Testament where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.

It would be interesting if I use the ideas of Margaret Barker, a famous researcher of 'Temple Theology' as a conclusion. I will bring here some of her opinions about wisdom: 'Jewish tradition, on an uncertain date, declared that six things had been created before the visible world, and the temple claim is made for the church. The book of Revelation shows the temple / holy city as a woman (Rev.21.9). The female figure who existed before the creation of the visible world was known as Wisdom (Prov. 8, 22-31), and she

54. See: *Библия, Книги священного писания Ветхого и Нового Завета*, Брюссель, 1983, стр. 2493. *Толковая Библия*, т.2. т. VII A 1. мак. 1,33, стр.13-14, комент.33.

55. В.М. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум через храм Соломона: архаичные предания о сионе и Ковчеге Завета в составе Кевра Негест и их трансляция через Константинополь', *Христианский Восток*, т. 2 (VIII), Москва, 2001, стр. 152-176.

made her throne in a pillar of cloud (ben Sira 24.4). The lady on the throne that looked like white wool was Wisdom... Then the woman was transformed before his eyes into a great city, and the archangel Uriel explained that she was Zion.

... In the time of Solomon, however, Zion had been the eastern hill of Jerusalem, and Solomon's temple had been built on Zion'[56].

## The Theological Content of the Fresco Medallion

The better understanding of 'Holy Sophia' and 'Holy Zion', to my mind, requires a consideration of the records about the famous churches dedicated to them. Here I mean the Holy Sophia churches in Constantinople and Edessa and Holy Zion in Aksum.

It is well known that very scarce theological records survive considering the building of these churches in historical, hagiographic and liturgical writings. Holy Sophia churches in Constantinople and Edessa, as well as Zion Church in Aksum seem to be exceptions in this regard[57].

In respect to Holy Sophia in Constantinople, I mean a Greek liturgical poem, the so-called Kondakion[58] dedicated to the second consecration of the church in 562, the initial blessing having taken place in 538. Similar notes can be found in the description of the Church of Holy Sophia, by Paul the Silentiary – *Ekphrasis*, as well as in the Syrian liturgical poem *Sogi̲to* dedicated to Holy Sophia Church in Edessa; the poem presumably dates from between 543 and 554.[59]

As noted, *Kondakion* and *Ekphrasis* by Paul the Silentiary are dedicated to the consecration of Holy Sophia in Constantinople , while the Syrian poem *Sogi̲to* is an eulogy to Holy Sophia at Edessa. Each of the three sources has immense importance for the study of the theological tradition of the consecration of

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56. M. Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, London, New York, 2007, pp. 41, 71, 201-238; See also: M. Barker, *Temple Theology, An Introduction*, London, 2004, pp. 75-93.

57. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.154.

58. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.154; See also: C.A.Trypanis, 'Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica', *Wiener Byzantinistische Studien*, 5, Wien, 1968, pp.139-147.

59. A.Palmer, 'The inauguration anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa: a new edition and translation with historical and architectural notes and a comparison with a contemporary Constantinopolitan Kontakion', with an appendix by Lyn Rodley || *Byzantine and Modern Greek studies* 12, 1988, pp. 117-167; A.Palmer, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia Again'. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 14, 1990, pp. 247-248; R.Macrides, P.Magdalino, 'The architecture of Ekphrasis: construction and context of Paul the Silentiary's poem on Hagia Sophia'. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 12, 1988, pp. 47-82. K.E. McVey, 'The Soghita on the Church of Edessa in the Context of Other Early Greek and Syriac Hymns for the Consecration of Church Buildings', *Aram* – Periodical 5, 1996, pp. 329-370.



ოთხთა ეკლესია
საკურთხევლის სარკმლის მოხატულობა,
წმ. სიონი

OTKHTA EKLESIA
PAINTINGS IN THE ARCH OF SANCTUARY WINDOW,
HOLY ZION



ოთხთა ეკლესია, წმ. სიონი, სქემა ვ. ჯო

churches dedicated to Holy Sophia which, as it appears, was the same at Constantinople and Edessa.[60] We should also bear in mind that the building of Holy Sophia in Constantinople was associated with Emperor Justinian. The restoration of Holy Sophia in Edessa was likewise made possible thanks to a significant contribution offered by Justinian.

The aforementioned written records present the churches dedicated to Holy Sophia, or divine wisdom, in Constantinople and Edessa, as the temples of King Solomon, i.e. each of them is identified as King Solomon's temple[61]. It is most likely that beyond this there is a certain liturgical tradition characteristic of the period between the $6^{th}$ and the $7^{th}$ century, which was in some way also related to the temple of the Old Testament[62].

In explaining this phenomenon, I would suggest a consideration of a Byzantine treatise dedicated to the building of Holy Sophia in Constantinople[63]. We also have an $11^{th}$-$12^{th}$ century translation of this treatise in old Georgian. The title of the treatise is: '*Account of the Construction of the Great Church of God, the Name of which is Holy Sophia, which is Wisdom. This was Built in Constantinople, the new Rome*'[64].

The Greek original of the treatise dates from the $8^{th}$-$9^{th}$ century, though it preserves numerous notes from even earlier records[65]. Chapter 27 of this treatise presents the following description of the blessing of Holy Sophia:

'And the building of the church and all the ecclesiastical structures came to an end on the $22^{nd}$ of December[66]. The king departed together with his retinue seated in a carriage and approached the gate, called holy doors... And that day a thousand cows, six thousand sheep, six hundred deer, thousands of other wild animals, twelve thousand hens and roosters and many heifers were slaughtered. And he offered this all to the poor who ate for three days. And then the king entered the church together with a cross and Patriarch Eutychius, the Patriarch of Constantinople[67] (552-565, 577-582). And the king sang as David did

60. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 154-155.

61. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.155.

62. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.155-158.

63. *Anonymi narratio de aedificatione templi S.Sophiae, Scriptores originum constantinopolitanum*, Rec. Th.Praeger, Lipsiae, 1901 (repr. 1989), Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, pp. 74-108; See also: G. Dagron, 'Constantinople imaginaire, Etudes sur le recueil des Patria', in *Bibliothèque Byzantine, Etudes*, 8 (1984), Paris, pp. 265-269, 303-309.

64. O.Beridze, *bizantiuri trak'tati sop'iis tadzris ashenebis shesaxeb da misi shuasaukuneobrivi, k'art'uli t'argmani*, T'bilisi, 1982.

65. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 155-156.

66. $22^{nd}$ December, 537.

67. Anachronism, Eutich was patriarch in 562. Most probably, the first and the second periods of ordaining are mixed up. See: Лурье, *Из Иерусалима в Аксум*, стр. 156, n. 43.

before the Ark, from the royal doors to the pulpit and said: 'We shall glorify you oh Lord God as you made me worthy to accomplish this deed. Solomon, I have surpassed you!'[68].

These mentioned notes used to be considered far from being credible mainly due to the sacrifice of so large a number of animals at the ceremony of consecration.[69] It should be mentioned that the tradition of sacrificing a large number of animals was not typical solely for pagans or Jews. The sacrifice of animals to the church was fairly widespread in the entire early Christian East. I suppose, this tradition takes its origin in the Old Testament rather than in the pagan period[70].

It was not until the second Trullan Synod in 692 that the sacrifice of animals was banned to the Chalcedonians by its 99th canon due to the secession of Armenian Monophysites[71]. Yet, the same canon allowed the distribution of meat outside the church as an act of charity, which was most probably not devoid of liturgical importance. This is attested by special Byzantine prayers surviving to the present day[72]. Even more interesting is the Georgian tradition relating to the ceremony of sacrificing animals outside a church, which survives in almost all the provinces of Georgia, and is especially widely practiced during the ceremonies dedicated to St George which are marked several times a year in Georgia[73].

Thus, the questioning of the credibility of this Byzantine treatise only due to the fact of the sacrifice of animals on the occasion of the consecration of the church described does not seem to be right[74].

However, Emperor Justinian's words: 'But I surpassed you, Solomon', which are attested in the same source, should be treated with caution. In this case it is difficult to prove with certainty whether the words were really pronounced by the Emperor. Yet, it must be interesting to take into account the cultural and

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68. Beridze, *bizantiuri trak'tati sop'iis tadzris ashenebis shesaxeb*, pp. 35-36.

69. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 155-164.; G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire, Etudes sur le recueil des Patria*, Bibliothèque byzantine, Études, 8, Paris, 1984, pp. 265-269, 300; See also: R.F. Taft, 'The Liturgy of the Great Church, On Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm', *DOP* 34-35, 1980-1981, pp. 45-76.; R.F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite, A Short History*, Collegeville, MN, 1992, p. 43.; Russian Edition: Р. Тафт, *Византийский церковный обряд*, СПБ, 2000. стр. 44-45.

70. Compare with Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 202-206.

71. M.van Esbroeck, *Armenien und die Pentekté*, in *Annuarion Historiae Conciliorum* 24 (1992), pp. 78-94. M.van Esbroeck, 'La politique arménienne de Byzance de Justinien II à Léon III', in *Studi sull' Oriente Cristiano*, 2.2 (1998), pp. 111-120. See also: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 158, 202-206.

72. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.158-160.

73. See: Iv.Javaxishvili, t'xzulebani, t.I, T 'bilisi, 1979, pp.83-101. I.Surguladze, mit'osi, kulti, rituali sak'art'veloshi, T'bilisi, 2003, pp.154-168; И.Сургуладзе, 'Святой Гиоргий в грузинских религиозных верованиях', in *сборник Огхапи*, Тб., 2002, стр. 369-373; Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.205; *Посольство Федота Елчина в Грузию, записки русских путешественников XVI-XVII вв.*, editors: Н.Н.Прокофьев, Л.И.Алехина, texts and commentaries, Москва, 1988, pp. 227-228, 270-289.

74. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 161, 202-206..

historical context of the period in which Justinian reigned. The investigation of this context, to my mind, has disclosed a number of noteworthy facts[75].

Firstly:

It is well-known that before the building of Holy Sophia in Constantinople by Justinian, Anicia Julianna of the royal family erected in 520 the Church of Polyektos the Martyr[76]. It is of note that according to an inscription on the wall of this church discovered by archaeologists: 'having built the house of God, she, Anicia Julianna, surpassed the wisdom of Solomon the Great'[77]. It is obvious that the reference is to the temple of King Solomon from the Old Testament.

Secondly:

The great contemporaries of Justinian held the view that by building Holy Sophia, the Emperor surpassed the great temple of Solomon, which was used as a model by him[78]. The viewpoint is further supported by a panegyric dedicated by Korip the Grammarian to Justin II during 556-578[79].

Thus, whether Justinian truly uttered the words – 'Solomon, I have surpassed you' – is not so relevant. What is most important though is that Justinian and his contemporaries in the 6th century, as well as later in the 7th century, not only imitated Solomon, but also tried to emulate him[80].

This supposition can be made in the light of the aforementioned sources, according to which Holy Sophia churches in Constantinople and Edessa were built as new temples of Solomon not only in terms of their typology, but also by considering the specific liturgical rite associated with a temple of the Old Testament: Here I mean not only the tradition of sacrificing animals referred to, but also the history of the

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75. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 161-162.

76. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 161-162.

77. C.Mango, I.Ševčenco, 'Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople', in *DOP* 15 (1961), pp. 243-247; R.M.Harrison, 'The Church of St. Polyeuktos in Istanbul and the Temple of Solomon', in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), pp. 276-279; M.Harrison, 'A Temple for Byzantium', in *The Discovery and Excavations of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul*, London, 1989, pp. 137-144; E.Ville-Patlagean, 'Une image de Solomon en basileus Byzantin', in *Revue des études juives* 181 (1962), pp. 9-33. CH. Milner, 'The Image of the Rightful Ruler: Anicia Juliana's Constantine mosaic in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos'. in *New Constantines: the Rythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium 4th-13th Centuries, Papers from the twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. Andrews*, March 1992, ed. P. Magdalino, Aldershot, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, Publications, 2 (1994), pp. 73-81.

78. Лурье, *Из Иерусалима в Аксум*, стр.162.

79. *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, Un laudem Iustini Augustimonoris, libri IV, Ed.and transl. with commentary by A.Cameron, London, 1976; See also: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', pp.162.

80. Compare with Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.162-164.

chalice of King Solomon[81].

Yet, here we should also recall another name of the temple of the Old Testament, Zion. As previously mentioned, one of the most relevant definitions of Zion given in the Old Testament books describes Zion not only as a temple mountain, but also as a residence of Jehovah and the temple of Solomon from the Old Testament, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept[82].

It thus appears that the temple of Solomon is also Zion. The importance of the temple of Solomon is rendered in an interesting way in the universal book of Ethiopian culture, *Kebra Nagast* (KN)[83], translated as *The Glory of Kings,* which describes the history of Ethiopia from the 6th to the 14th century. The hagiographic compositions and accounts given in the book belong to different periods. The most relevant for us is the story of transferring the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia[84]. This is a hagiographic work. Despite the legendary character of the compositions surviving as part of *The Glory of Kings*, the entire book and the story of the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia is not devoid of historical importance[85].

Let me also make a brief overview of hagiographic studies associated with the Bollandists and launched by the renowned Bollandist, Hippolyte Delehaye[86].

After Delehaye, his studies were continued by an equally well-known Bollandist, P. Peeters[87], who employed a method of comparative analysis. Impressive results were obtained by the famous scholar Michel van Esbroeck[88] thanks to the improvement of the method of historical and comparative analysis of hagiographic texts beginning in the 1970s and continuing until 2003.It is also of note that A. Kazhdan, associated with an absolutely different scientific approach and methodology, justified the use of the experience of van Esbroeck with the words of the latter: 'A symbolic story is no less useful for writing

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81. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', pp. 162-164; This is a chalice with which the apostles held the Holy Eucharist after the resurrection of Christ. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.197.

82. See: M.Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian worship*, pp. 41, 71, 201-238; M.Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 75-93.

83. C.Bezold, *Kebra Nagast, Die Herrlichkeit der Könige, Nach dem Handschriften in Berlin, London, Oxford und Paris zum erstenmal im äthiopischen Urtext hrsg. und mit deutscher Uebersetzung versehen. Abhandlungen der philos.-hist. Kl. der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften* 23 (1905), Abt. I.; See also: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 137-141..

84. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.137-138.

85. Compare with Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.138.

86. H.Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Deuxième édition, revue et corrigée, Bruxelles, 1966 (SH 13 b). Compare with Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.142-146.

87. Bibliography, See: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.146-147.

88. A good confirmation of this is the bibliography prepared by M.van Esbroeck, which was given to me in 2003 by him and is kept in my archives. See also: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.146-147.

history than an official report by a good historian'[89].

The facts and characters either explicitly or implicitly referred to in hagiographic texts are often difficult to identify, which is natural. However, thanks to their association with certain epochs and historical characters, historical events enable us to establish the facts accounted in a composition.

Hagiographic traditions took their own path of development in different countries of Christendom, but they evolved under the influence of both Christian and non-Christian tradition, due to which each tradition had a 'hagiographic substratum' of its own, which often distinguished it from other traditions. By weighing up these differences, van Esbroeck many times succeeded in disclosing historical events hidden in the mist of the mentioned traditions[90].

It was by using a historical-comparative method that van Esbroeck undertook his analysis of *The Glory of Kings*. Having compared separate texts with hagiographic and other sources, he established that the records given in *The Glory of Kings* were characteristic of the 6th-7th century[91].

Also, the study of *The Glory of Kings* showed that the prototype of Ethiopian Zion in Aksum, into which Menelik, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba removed the Ark of the Covenant, is the temple of Solomon from the Old Testament[92], while Aksum is Monophysite Jerusalem. This is attested by a series of accounts spread in the Monophysite community, as well as by archaeological evidence[93].

Concerning this statement, I think, it would be interesting to give the three conclusions of M. Heldman:

1. Aksum was a new religious centre built by King Kaleb in the 4th century A.D.;
2. It was built as a New Jerusalem without having any connection to Constantinople;
3. The cathedral of Aksum was a new temple, which was constructed for the Ark of the Covenant like the temple of Solomon[94].

Thus, as already mentioned, according to the 6th-7th century sources, Constantinople and Edessa churches are new temples of King Solomon. But as it appears from the Ethiopian history of *The Glory of*

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89. A.Kazhdan, 'Constantin imaginaire', in *Byzantine Legends of the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great, Byzantion* 57 (1987), p. 196.

90. M.van Esbroeck, 'Le substrat hagiographique de la mission Khazare de Constantin - Cyrille', in *AB* 104 (1986), pp. 337-348; See also: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 150.

91. M.van Esbroeck, 'L'Éthiopie à l'époque de Justinien: S. Arethas de Neğran et S. Athanase de Clysma', in *IV Congresso Internationale di Studi Etiopici, Roma*, 10-15 aprile, 1972; Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.152-154.

92. Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр.166-180. Compare with M.Heldman, 'Architectral Symbolism, Sacred Geography and the Ethiopian Church', in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22 (1992), pp. 236-237.

93. See: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 175-176, there is a long list of bibliography about this question.

94. M.Heldman, *Architectural Symbolism, Sacred Geography and the Ethiopian Church*, pp. 222-241; See also: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 173-174, 194-195 ; see also: I.Karaulashvili, ramdenime sitqva iustinianes, edesis cminda sop'iis tadzris, k'ristianuli sionisa da et'iopuri k'ristianobis shesaxeb, ark'eologiuri dziebani, 3, T'bilisi, 2010, pp.662-695.

*Kings*, Zion in Aksum is also a new temple of King Solomon.

If this is true, it should not be difficult to explain the reason for the inscription 'Zion' accompanying the image of Holy Sophia in the medallion of Otkhta Eklesia. Obviously, Otkhta Eklesia, dedicated to Holy Sophia, is a new temple of King Solomon, but also, according to Holy Scripture, it is Zion, an image of the temple of the Old Testament.

Hence, the outcome of my research can be summarized as follows: the image of a holy woman set in a medallion adorning the window of a sanctuary apse is Holy Sophia, 'Wisdom has built her house; she has supported it with seven pillars and ordered her maids to prepare the table of wisdom'. In other words, Otkhta Eklesia was dedicated to Holy Sophia, but it also was Zion like the Holy Sophia churches in Constantinople and Edessa and Zion in Aksum.

If my assumptions are trustworthy, the theological essence of the paintings below the medallion shall also appear logical:

a) In the south jamb – Moses the prophet in the moment of receiving the tablets on Mount Sinai, which establishes the first covenant of the temple of the Old Testament.

b) The brother of Moses and the first high priest of the temple of the Old Testament, Aaron, and not Melchizedek, on the north jamb, with the Ark of the Covenant and an incense burner, as the first performer of the Lord's covenants[95].

c) Four prophets and the same number of high priests led by kings David and Solomon, on each side of Moses and Aaron, on the walls of the apse. According to Tina Virsaladze, in this context the prophets would obtain the essence of the Old Testament pre-images for the great fathers of the Christian church[96].

To me it is obvious that this part of the paintings presents a temple established by divine wisdom, the symbolic image of which is set in the fresco medallion above: 'the image of wisdom holding a temple accompanied by the inscription 'Sioni' (Zion)[97]. The church was founded in compliance with the canon and with great efforts by the prophets. Kings David and Solomon in the Holy City of Jerusalem effected the earthly realisation of the divine temple: the former placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy City, while the latter built the first temple of the Old Testament.

## The Basis in the Georgian Tradition for the Theological Content of the the Fresco Medallion

Hence, the theological content of the fresco we have discussed must be obvious. However, it is also

95. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 38.
96. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 38.
97. Virsaladze, *k'art'uli mxatvrobis istoriidan*, p. 38. here as well p. 38, footnote 62.

ის დარად.
სრულიად ლოგიკურია ასევე მედ-
ნაარსი, მხედველობაში მაქვს:
ა მიერ სინას მთაზე სჯულის ფიცარ-
ლი ეკლესიის პირველი განჩინების

ადეკი), მოსეს ძმა, რომელიც ძვე-
ლის კიდობნითა და საცეცხლურით,

ა-ოთხი წინასწარმეტყველი და ამ-
ავეში. ქ-ნი თინას აზრით, ამ კონ-
მამების ძველაღთქმისეული წინა-

ი წარმოგვიდგენს ღვთაებრივი სი-
სახელებაც ფრესკულ მედალიონ-
არწერით – „სიონი".[97] ტაძრის და-
ლთა დიდი მცდელობით. ზეციური
იმში მეფეების დავითისა და სოლ-
ბრძანა წმ. ქალაქში, ხოლო მეორემ

## ინაარსის საფუძვლები
## ი

ული მოხატულობის თეოლოგიური
ოვანი უნდა იყოს ოთხთა ეკლესიის
უძვლების მოძიება თვით ქართულ
არკვევა.
ხსენოთ სოლომონ მეფის ტაძრისა

3, სქ. 62.



important to trace the roots of the aforementioned theological essence of Otkhta Ekleia in the Georgian tradition and to establish its historical and cultural context.

In this light, we shall first of all recall the earliest evidence of the temple of King Solomon and Zion in Georgian sources: 'tsmidai tsmidatai' (Holy of Holies).

According to the medieval Georgian chronicle *Moktsevai Kartlisai*, The Conversion of Kartli, the first church built in Mtskheta was called the 'Holy of Holies'[98]. Another Georgian chronicle, *Kartlis Tskhovreba,* The Life of Georgia, mentions that a fine cedar of Lebanon was cut down in the royal garden in order to carve seven pillars to support the first church to be built in Mtskheta. Six pillars were easily raised, while the seventh could be erected only thanks to a miracle worked by St Nino's prayers[99].

The name of the church noted in the aforementioned sources, 'Holy of Holies', and the number of pillars (seven) made to support the church are apparently related to the temple built by King Solomon according to the Old Testament. The 'Holy of Holies' recurs in the Old Testament several times. It denotes the tabernacle of Moses and later, the holy place in Solomon's temple where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. But the 'Holy of Holies' the holiest place in the tabernacle and the temple mentioned in the Old Testament not only because of the Ark of the Covenant which was placed there, but because, as rightly noted by A. Olesnitski, it is where the Revelation of the Lord occurred[100]. The latter explains why the Ark of the Covenant was kept there.

The Lower Church of Mtskheta, the 'Holy of Holies', like the 'Holy of Holies' temple of Solomon was the holiest site in Georgia, as it was the place of the Revelation of the Lord[101]. It, unlike the 'Holy of Holies' of Moses and Solomon, which had the Ark of Covenant, kept Christ's tunic. At the same time this church obviously was also the 'Great Zion'. *Kartlis Tskhovreba* mentions: 'in Mtskheta King Vakhtang built the Church of the Apostles, and raised a pillar to the south of the place where the Church of Great Zion once stood'[102]. According to this extract, King Vakhtang Gorgasali built a new church of the Apostles on the site of the Lower Church - a 'Holy of Holies', also called Great Zion (Didi Sioni). The fact points to the 5th century tradition of Jerusalem[103].

It is apparent that the first church, referred to as the 'Holy of Holies', built in Mtskheta, the Georgians'

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98. *dzeglebi*, I, p.160.

99. S.Qauxch'ishvili (ed.), *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, I, pp.111-119.

100. А.А.Олесницкий, *Ветхозаветный Храм в Иерусалиме, Православный Палестинский сборник*, СПБ, 1889, стр. 176.

101. Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi, gv.179;* Compare with M.Surguladze, 'socialuri mexsierebis p'ak'tebi 'ninos c'xovrebidan', in: *mravalt 'avi*, t.XIX, 2001, pp. 316-322.

102. *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, I, p.198.

103. See: *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, pp. 180-181.

new Jerusalem, already during St Nino's activity was an icon of the temple of Solomon, but it was also called Great Zion like the first temple of the Old Testament[104].

This fact should not seem surprising considering the twenty-six-century-old history of relations between the Holy Land and Georgia, as indicated by ancient tradition. The ties became stronger following the official adoption of Christianity in Kartli in the 4th century.

Beginning from the 4th-5th century, the capital of Kartli, Mtskheta, was perceived as a new Jerusalem by the Georgians, and not only symbolically. The establishment of the holy sites of the holy city from the time of Christ in Mtskheta enabled the adoption of the liturgical practice from Jerusalem in 5th century Kartli. The practice remained in use until the 11th century, when it was replaced by that of Constantinople .[105] According to the records informing us of the establishment of the holy sites in Mtskheta, the image of the Old Testament temple founded by St Nino is the 'Holy of Holies' or Zion, which was most likely incorporated into Christian sacred geography beginning from the time of the activity of St Nino.

It must be of interest that similar was the case in Aksum. Strikingly similar stories of the conversion of Iberia and Aksum are well-known from scholarly literature[106]. Aksum is a 6th century Monophysite Jerusalem. The reason for its interpretation as a holy city, as in the case of Mtskheta, is Holy Zion, or the new temple of Solomon, where the Ark of the Covenant had been transferred. It seems natural.that Zion in Aksum was also incorporated in the Christian sacred geography. The confirmation of this might be the

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104. See: Лурье, 'Из Иерусалима в Аксум', стр. 164; See also: H.Busse, *The Temple of Jerusalem and its Restitution by 'Abd almalik b. Marwan*, Lewišh art 23-24 (1997-1998), *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem*, Ed. B. Kühnel, pp. 23-33; M.Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 1-32; O.E.Этингоф, *образ Богоматери, Очерки Византийской иконографии XI-XIII вв*, Москва, 2000, стр. 13-38.

105. К.Кекелидзе, 'К вопросу об Иерусалимском происхождении Грузинской церкви', The Etudes, vol. IV, Tbilisi, 1957, pp. 358-363; A.Shanidze, *xanmeti lek'c'ionari*, T'bilisi, 1944, 021; M.Tarchnišvili, *Zwei georgiesche Lektionarfragmente aus dem 5, Und 8, Jahrhundert*. in *Le Muséon*, t. 73, 3-4 (1960), pp. 261-285; A.Renoux, Le codex arménien Jerusalem 121. 1, Introduction, Patrologia Orientalis, t.35, Turnhout, 1969, pp.22-24; M. van Esbroeck, *Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens*, Louvain – La – Newe, 1975, pp. 388-394; E.Metreveli, L.Xevsuriani, C',Chankievi, *udzvelesi iadgari*, T'bilisi, 1980, pp. 666-668; Mgaloblishvili, *klarjuli mravalt'avi*, pp.172-182.

106. C.Haas, *Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia*, in *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 1 (2008), pp. 101-126; About Syrian Fathers see also: Z.Alek'sidze, *abibos nekreselis martvilobis shescavlis tek'stologiur-k'ronologiuri sakit'xebi*, in mravalt'avi, XVIII (1999), T 'bilisi, pp.12-29; Z.Alek'sidze, *mandilioni da keramioni dzvel k'art'ul mcerlobashi*, in Akademia, T'bilisi, 2001, pp. 9-15; Z.Alek'sidze, *vin aris sinas mt'aze aghmoch'enil asurel mamat'a c'xovrebashi moxseniebuli amaspo dedop'ali?* in collection: axlo aghmosavlet'i da sak'art'velo, IV (2005), T'bilisi: , pp.206-207.

arrival of the thirteen Syrian fathers into Iberia[107] and of the nine Syrian fathers into Aksum[108].

Located at a distance of almost two thousand miles, Iberia and Aksum marked the extreme borders of Christendom. Along with that, it was between the Caucasus and the Red Sea that vital trade and migratory routes ran, thus facilitating the spread of Christianity[109].

Both in Iberia and Aksum, Syrian fathers found the earthly icon of the holy city of Jerusalem, with its holy sites the origin of which was the temple mentioned in the Old Testament: in Mtskheta it was the 'Holy of Holies' or Great Zion, in which Christ's tunic was buried and in Aksum, Zion, to which the Ark of the Covenant had been removed. The holy sites of Mtskheta and Aksum were thus the real extreme borders of the Christian ecumene.

In the light of this, the fact of building Otkhta Eklesia, a new temple of Solomon, by Davit Kuropalates in the 10$^{th}$ century is not surprising. However, to my mind, it is essential to establish the reason for referring to this tradition of the Old Testament and its application in Georgia in the 10$^{th}$ century. What was the historical and cultural context that gave rise to such a demand?

We know from scholarly literature, that the restoration of the traditions associated with the antiquities of the time of Kings David and Solomon is related to the Palestinian ideology of the early-Islamic period. It has been assumed that the spread of this ideology was encouraged by the construction of Muslim monuments on the Temple Mount of the Old Testament in Jerusalem in the 7$^{th}$-8$^{th}$ century[110].

Yet, it is also noteworthy that there had been earlier instances of the restoration of the aforementioned tradition originating from the Old Testament. It must be sufficient to mention the building campaign initiated in the 6$^{th}$ century by Emperor Justinian. As noted, Holy Sophia at Constantinople was built as an icon of the temple of Solomon and was consecrated according to the tradition asociated with it, while King Solomon became not just a model to copy but also an object of emulation. The same refers to the restoration of Holy Sophia in Edessa: in this case Emperor Justinian perceived himself as King Abgar, an ideal Christian monarch[111].

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107. See a long list of bibliography about the arrival of the Syrian Fathers in Kartli in: D.Merkviladze, *asurel mamat'a k'art'lshi mosvlis dro*, T'bilisi, 1996, pp. 1-33; See also: Z.Alek'sidze, *abibos nekreselis martvilobis shescavlis tek'stologiur-k'ronologiuri sakit'xebi*, pp.12-29; Z.Alek'sidze, *mandilioni da keramioni dzvel k'art'ul mcerlobashi*, pp.9–15; Z.Alek'sidze, *vin aris sinas mt'aze aghmoch'enil asurel mamat'a c'xovrebashi moxseniebuli amaspo dedop'ali?* pp.206-207.

108. C. Haas, *Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia*, pp. 101-126.

109. Compare with C. Haas, *Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia*, pp. 101-126.

110. Busse, *The Temple of Jerusalem and its Restitution by 'Abd almalik B. Marwan*, pp. 23-33; See also: Лурье, *Из Иерусалима в Аксум*, стр. 167.

111. Palmer, *The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa, pp. 117-167; See also:* Лурье, *Из Иерусалима в Аксум*, стр. 166-200.

As regards Georgia, I have already pointed out the strong traditions of the Old Testament and the New Testament in the 4th-5th centuries. The building of Otkhta Eklesia by Davit Kuropalates in the 10th century is a brilliant manifestation of the continuation in these traditions. The church was conceived as a new temple of King Solomon and Great Zion at the same time.

This period in the history of Georgia saw the consolidation of the Georgian statehood and Georgian lands under the guidance of Davit Kuropalates, an outstanding representative of the Bagrationi family.

Georgian and foreign written and non-written sources of roughly the same period support the records about the provenance of the Georgian Bagrationi family from David the Prophet. Sources include chronicles such as *Juansheris istoria,* History by Juansher[112], *Matiane Kartlisai,* Chronicle of Georgia[113], *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli* [114] , *Chronicle by Sumbat Davitis dze*[115] and a bas-relief from Opiza Monastery[116]. Constantine Porphyrogenitus narrates a similar story of the origin of the Bagrationi family[117]. It is also to be borne in mind that, unlike the Armenian tradition, Georgian and Byzantine sources consider David the Prophet as a progenitor of the Georgian Bagrationi dynasty[118].

The comparative analysis of the new collection of Georgian manuscripts on Mount Sinai (Sin 50)[119] and the aforementioned Georgian historical records revealed that the emergence of the Bagrationi house on the political arena is associated with the incorporation by King Vakhtang Gorgasali of the province of Klarjeti, which had been seized by Byzantium. It is known that in the 470s Vakhtang Gorgasali succeeded in returning 'western Kartli' (Klarjeti, Achara, Samtskhe and part of Artaan-Javakheti) occupied by Byzantium following a century-old expansion[120].

Most likely it is from the 6th century that the progeny of King Vakhtang Gorgasali and the Bagrationi family began to be bonded with ties of kinship. In the 570s the Bagrationis became the erismtavaris or

112. Juansheri, *c'xovreba vaxtang gorgaslisa*, in k'art'lis cxovreba, t.I, Tbilisi, 1955.

113. *matiane k'art'lisa,* in k'art'lis cxovreba, t.I, 1955.

114. Il.Abuladze (ed.), *shromay da moghuacebay ghirsad c'xorebisay cmidisa da netarisa mamisa ch'uenisa grigolisi ark'imandritisay, xandzt'isa da shatberdisa aghmsheneblisay, da mis t'ana q'senebay mravalt'a mamat'a netart'ay*, in: dzveli k'art'uli agiograp'iuli literaturis dzeglebi, t.I, T'bilisi, 1963, pp. 248-319.

115. Sumbat davit'is dze, *c'xovreba da ucqeba bagratoniant'a*, in k'art'lis c'xovreba, t. I.

116. Jobadze, *adreuli shua saukuneebis k'art'uli monastrebi*, pp. 28-30; Xoshtaria, *klarjet'is eklesiebi da monastrebi*, pp.80-92.

117. Konstantine Porp'irogeneti, *De administrando imperio*, georgica, bizantieli mcerlebis c'nobebi sak'art'velos shesaxeb, vol. IV, part. II, t'argmani da ganmartebebi S.Qauxch'ishvilisa, T'bilisi, 1952, pp.224-289.

118. M.Surguladze, *bagrationt'a carmoshobis bibliuri legenda,* klio 22, in saistorio almanaxi, T'bilisi, 2004, p.1.

119. Z.Alek'sidze, *k'art'lshi bagrationt'a dinastiis pirveli gamoc'ena*, in collection bagrationebi, T'bilisi, 2003, pp.27-36.

120. D.Musxelishvili, *sak'art'velo IV-VIII saukuneebshi*, T'bilisi, 2003, p. 163.

მბატ დავითის ძის ქრონიკა“[115], ოპიზის
ანალოგიურ ისტორიას მოგვითხრობს
უთუოდ გასათვალისწინებელია ისიც,
ინასწარმეტყველს, სომხურისგან გან-
ლიარებენ[118].

(sin 50)[119] და ზემოთ უკვე ჩამოთვ-
ვის საფუძველზე ნათელი ხდება, რომ
გამოჩენა ხდება ვახტანგ გორგასლის
ის შემოერთების შემდეგ. როგორც
ომა ბიზანტიის ასწლოვანი ექსპანსიის
ლარჯეთი, აჭარა, სამცხე და არტან-

ვი მყარდება მეფე ვახტანგ გორგასლის
ობრივად, VI საუკუნის 70-იანი წლები-
ბაგრატიონები, რომლებიც რამდენიმე
ყოველივე ეს ამ საგვარეულო სახლის
უნიდან მცხეთის „ჯვარი“ ბაგრატიონთა
იდრეებთან დამოყვრების გზით ფარ-
ებიან[121]. საინტერესოა აღინიშნოს ისიც,

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ვიით, ტ. I., 1955.

მამისა ჩუენისა გრიგოლისი არქიმანდრიტისაჲ,
ავალთა მამათა ნეტართაჲ. ძველი ქართული
ტ. 1, თბ. 1963, გვ. 248-319.

ის ცხოვრება, ტ. 1.

28-30; დ.ხოშტარია, კლარჯეთის ეკლესიები

ეორგიკა, ბიზანტიელი მწერლების ცნობები
შვილისა, თბ., 1952, გვ. 224-289.

იო 22, საისტორიო ალმანახი, თბ., 2004, გვ. 1.

ნა, კრებ. ბაგრატიონები, თბ., 2003, გვ. 27-36.

გ. 163.

ნა, გვ. 27-36.



ხთა ეკლესია, აღმოსავლეთი ფასადი
OTKHTA EKLESIA, EAST FACADE

rulers of Kartli and retained their position through several generations. This obviously testifies to the royal ambitions of the dynasty. It appears that beginning from the 7th century, Jvari (Holy Cross) Church at Mtskheta served as a funerary chapel of the Bagrationis. Also, by marrying the heirs of Vakhtang Gorgasali, the Bagrationis became the legal descendants of the Parnavaz and Gorgasali dynasties[121]. Of note is that only the Bagrationis were privileged to hold the Byzantine title of Kuropalates[122].

However, together with the alteration of political circumstances, they left Kartli and returned to their land until the situation changed in favour of their dynasty. In the 9th century, the Bagrationi house exposed its royal ambitions and made an active appearance on the political stage[123].

The exceptional location and beauty of mountains, cliffs, forests, gorges and churches and monasteries dispersed across Georgia is apparently without doubt. This beautiful landscape did not leave anyone, either Georgian or foreigner, indifferent, but yet, visiting Tao-Klarjeti invokes a special feeling of grandeur. It must have been here, under these settings that may also be referred to as the 'Glory of Georgia', that the mission of creating a strong united state by the Bagrationi royal family was launched. It is here that the brilliant works of art, among which Otkhta Eklesia is one of the most outstanding, could be created.

The splendour of the church is manifested in its architecture and paintings, while the fresco medallion adorning the sanctuary explains the conception of the 'great, proud Iberian', as he was called by the Byzantines[124], Davit Kuropalates, who ventured to build a new temple to emulate the one of the Old Testament, who surpassed the glory of the temple of King Solomon and who built a church, which was not merely a new temple of Solomon, but also a new Zion. By erecting this church, Davit Kuropalates followed the example of his ancestors and, succeeded, this time in the 10th century, in including his land in the sacred geography of Christendom.

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121. Alek'sidze, *k'art'lshi bagrationt'a dinastiis pirveli gamoc'ena*, pp. 27-36.
122. Alek'sidze, *k'art'lshi bagrationt'a dinastiis pirveli gamoc'ena*, p. 31.
123. Surguladze, *bagrationt'a carmoshobis bibliuri legenda, pp.12-17.*
124. Partologia Graeca, ed.By J.P.Migne, t.127, Paris, 1864; Reprint by Brepols, Turnout Belgium, 1977, p. 442.